ROMAIN ROLLAND

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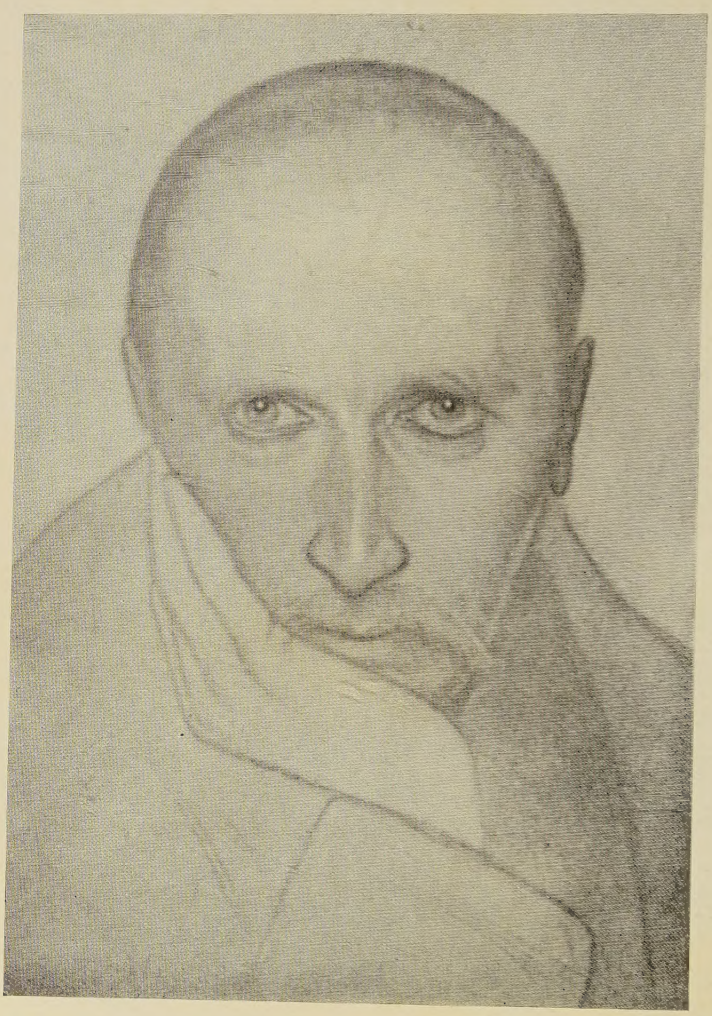

Romain Rolland after a drawing by Granié (1909)

ROMAIN ROLLAND

THE MAN AND HIS WORK

BY

STEFAN ZWEIG

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT
BY
EDEN and CEDAR PAUL

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Dedication

Not merely do I describe the work of a great European. Above all do I pay tribute to a personality, that of one who for me and for many others has loomed as the most impressive moral phenomenon of our age. Modelled upon his own biographies of classical figures, endeavouring to portray the greatness of an artist while never losing sight of the man or forgetting his influence upon the world of moral endeavour, conceived in this spirit, my book is likewise inspired with a sense of personal gratitude, in that, amid these days forlorn, it has been vouchsafed to me to know the miracle of so radiant an existence.

IN COMMEMORATION

of this uniqueness, I dedicate the book to those few who, in the hour of fiery trial, remained faithful to

ROMAIN ROLLAND

AND TO OUR BELOVED HOME OF

EUROPE

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PART ONE
BIOGRAPHICAL

> The surge of the Heart's energies would not break in a mist of foam, nor be subtilized into Spirit, did not the rock of Fate, from the beginning of days, stand ever silent in the way.
>
> HOLDERLIN.

ROMAIN ROLLAND

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE first fifty years of Romain Rolland's life were passed in inconspicuous and almost solitary labors. Thenceforward, his name was to become a storm center of European discussion. Until shortly before the apocalyptic year, hardly an artist of our days worked in such complete retirement, or received so little recognition.

Since that year, no artist has been the subject of so much controversy. His fundamental ideas were not destined to make themselves generally known until there was a world in arms bent upon destroying them.

Envious fate works ever thus, interweaving the lives of the great with tragical threads. She tries her powers to the uttermost upon the strong, sending events to run counter to their plans, permeating their lives with strange allegories, imposing obstacles in their path—that they may be guided more unmistakably in the right course. Fate plays with them, plays a game with a sublime issue,

for all experience is precious. Think of the greatest among our contemporaries; think of Wagner, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Tolstoi, Strindberg; in the case of each of them, destiny has superadded to the creations of the artist's mind, the drama of personal experience.

Notably do these considerations apply to the life of Romain Rolland. The significance of his life's work becomes plain only when it is contemplated as a whole. It was slowly produced, for it had to encounter great dangers; it was a gradual revelation, tardily consummated. The foundations of this splendid structure were deeply dug in the firm ground of knowledge, and were laid upon the hidden masonry of years spent in isolation. Thus tempered by the ordeal of a furnace seven times heated, his work has the essential imprint of humanity. Precisely owing to the strength of its foundations, to the solidity of its moral energy, was Rolland's thought able to stand unshaken throughout the war storms that have been ravaging Europe. While other monuments to which we had looked up with veneration, cracking and crumbling, have been leveled with the quaking earth, the monument he had builded stands firm "above the battle," above the medley of opinions, a pillar of strength towards which all free spirits can turn for consolation amid the tumult of the world.

CHAPTER II

EARLY CHILDHOOD

ROMAIN ROLLAND was born on January 29, 1866, a year of strife, the year when Sadowa was fought. His native town was Clamecy, where another imaginative writer, Claude Tillier, author of *Mon Oncle Benjamin*, was likewise born. An ancient city, within the confines of old-time Burgundy, Clamecy is a quiet place, where life is easy and uneventful. The Rollands belong to a highly respected middle-class family. His father, who was a lawyer, was one of the notables of the town. His mother, a pious and serious-minded woman, devoted all her energies to the upbringing of her two children; Romain, a delicate boy, and his sister Madeleine, younger than he. As far as the environment of daily life was concerned, the atmosphere was calm and untroubled; but in the blood of the parents existed contrasts deriving from earlier days of French history, contrasts not yet fully reconciled. On the father's side, Rolland's ancestors were champions of the Convention, ardent partisans of the Revolution, and some of them sealed their faith with their blood. From his mother's family he inherited the Jansenist spirit, the investigator's temperament of Port-Royal. He was thus

endowed by both parents with tendencies to fervent faith, but tendencies to faith in contradictory ideals. In France this cleavage between love for religion and passion for freedom, between faith and revolution, dates from centuries back. Its seeds were destined to blossom in the artist.

His first years of childhood were passed in the shadow of the defeat of 1870. In *Antoinette*, Rolland sketches the tranquil life of just such a provincial town as Clamecy. His home was an old house on the bank of a canal. Not from this narrow world were to spring the first delights of the boy who, despite his physical frailty, was so passionately sensitive to enjoyment. A mighty impulse from afar, from the unfathomable past, came to stir his pulses. Early did he discover music, the language of languages, the first great message of the soul. His mother taught him the piano. From its tones he learned to build for himself the infinite world of feeling, thus transcending the limits imposed by nationality. For while the pupil eagerly assimilated the easily understood music of French classical composers, German music at the same time enthralled his youthful soul. He has given an admirable description of the way in which this revelation came to him: "We had a number of old German music books. German? Did I know the meaning of the word? In our part of the world I believe no one had ever seen a German . . . I turned the leaves of the old books, spelling out the notes on the piano, . . . and these runnels, these streamlets of mel-

ody, which watered my heart, sank into the thirsty ground as the rain soaks into the earth. The bliss and the pain, the desires and the dreams, of Mozart and Beethoven, have become flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone. I am them, and they are me . . . How much do I owe them. When I was ill as a child, and death seemed near, a melody of Mozart would watch over my pillow like a lover . . . Later, in crises of doubt and depression, the music of Beethoven would revive in me the sparks of eternal life . . . Whenever my spirit is weary, whenever I am sick at heart, I turn to my piano and bathe in music."

Thus early did the child enter into communion with the wordless speech of humanity; thus early had the all-embracing sympathy of the life of feeling enabled him to pass beyond the narrows of town and of province, of nation and of era. Music was his first prayer to the elemental forces of life; a prayer daily repeated in countless forms; so that now, half a century later, a week and even a day rarely elapses without his holding converse with Beethoven. The other saint of his childhood's days, Shakespeare, likewise belonged to a foreign land. With his first loves, all unaware, the lad had already overstridden the confines of nationality. Amid the dusty lumber in a loft he discovered an edition of Shakespeare, which his grandfather (a student in Paris when Victor Hugo was a young man and Shakespeare mania was rife) had bought and forgotten. His childish interest was first awakened by a volume of faded en-

gravings entitled *Galerie des femmes de Shakespeare.* His fancy was thrilled by the charming faces, by the magical names Perdita, Imogen, and Miranda. But soon, reading the plays, he became immersed in the maze of happenings and personalities. He would remain in the loft hour after hour, disturbed by nothing beyond the occasional trampling of the horses in the stable below or by the rattling of a chain on a passing barge. Forgetting everything and forgotten by all he sat in a great armchair with the beloved book, which like that of Prospero made all the spirits of the universe his servants. He was encircled by a throng of unseen auditors, by imaginary figures which formed a rampart between himself and the world of realities.

As ever happens, we see a great life opening with great dreams. His first enthusiasms were most powerfully aroused by Shakespeare and Beethoven. The youth inherited from the child, the man from the youth, this passionate admiration for greatness. One who has hearkened to such a call, cannot easily confine his energies within a narrow circle. The school in the petty provincial town had nothing more to teach this aspiring boy. The parents could not bring themselves to send their darling alone to the metropolis, so with heroic self-denial they decided to sacrifice their own peaceful existence. The father resigned his lucrative and independent position as notary, which made him a leading figure in Clamecy society, in order to become one of the numberless employees of a Parisian bank. The familiar home, the patriarchal life, were thrown aside that the

Rollands might watch over their boy's schooling and upgrowing in the great city. The whole family looked to Romain's interest, thus teaching him early what others do not usually learn until full manhood—responsibility.

CHAPTER III

SCHOOL DAYS

THE boy was still too young to feel the magic of Paris. To his dreamy nature, the clamorous and brutal materialism of the city seemed strange and almost hostile. Far on into life he was to retain from these hours a hidden dread, a hidden shrinking from the fatuity and soullessness of great towns, an inexplicable feeling that there was a lack of truth and genuineness in the life of the capital. His parents sent him to the Lyceum of Louis the Great, a celebrated high school in the heart of Paris. Many of the ablest and most distinguished sons of France, have been among the boys who, humming like a swarm of bees, emerge daily at noon from the great hive of knowledge. He was introduced to the items of French classical education, that he might become "un bon perroquet Cornélien." His vital experiences, however, lay outside the domain of this logical poesy or poetical logic; his enthusiasms drew him, as heretofore, towards a poesy that was really alive, and towards music. Nevertheless, it was at school that he found his first companion.

By the caprice of chance, for this friend likewise fame was to come only after twenty years of silence. Romain

Rolland and his intimate Paul Claudel (author of *Annonce faite à Marie*), the two greatest imaginative writters in contemporary France, who crossed the threshold of school together, were almost simultaneously, twenty years later, to secure a European reputation. During the last quarter of a century, the two have followed very different paths in faith and spirit, have cultivated widely divergent ideals. Claudel's steps have been directed towards the mystic cathedral of the Catholic past; Rolland has moved through France and beyond, towards the ideal of a free Europe. At that time, however, in their daily walks to and from school, they enjoyed endless conversations, exchanging thoughts upon the books they had read, and mutually inflaming one another's youthful ardors. The bright particular star of their heaven was Richard Wagner, who at that date was casting a marvelous spell over the mind of French youth. In Rolland's case it was not simply Wagner the artist who exercised this influence, but Wagner the universal poietic personality.

School days passed quickly and somewhat joylessly. Too sudden had been the transition from the romanticist home to the harshly realist Paris. To the sensitive lad, the city could only show its teeth, display its indifference, manifest the fierceness of its rhythm. These qualities, this Maelstrom aspect, aroused in his mind something approaching to alarm. He yearned for sympathy, cordiality, soaring aspirations; now as before, art was his savior, "glorious art, in so many gray hours." His chief joys were the rare afternoons spent at popular Sunday

concerts, when the pulse of music came to thrill his heart —how charmingly is not this described in *Antoinette!* Nor had Shakespeare lost power in any degree, now that his figures, seen on the stage, were able to arouse mingled dread and ecstasy. The boy gave his whole soul to the dramatist. "He took possession of me like a conqueror; I threw myself to him like a flower. At the same time, the spirit of music flowed over me as water floods a plain; Beethoven and Berlioz even more than Wagner. I had to pay for these joys. I was, as it were, intoxicated for a year or two, much as the earth becomes supersaturated in time of flood. In the entrance examination to the Normal School I failed twice, thanks to my preoccupation with Shakespeare and with music." Subsequently, he discovered a third master, a liberator of his faith. This was Spinoza, whose acquaintance he made during an evening spent alone at school, and whose gentle intellectual light was henceforward to illumine Rolland's soul throughout life. The greatest of mankind have ever been his examples and companions.

When the time came for him to leave school, a conflict arose between inclination and duty. Rolland's most ardent wish was to become an artist after the manner of Wagner, to be at once musician and poet, to write heroic musical dramas. Already there were floating through his mind certain musical conceptions which, as a national contrast to those of Wagner, were to deal with the French cycle of legends. One of these, that of St. Louis, he was in later years indeed to transfigure, not in music, but in winged words. His parents, however, considered

such wishes premature. They demanded more practical endeavors, and recommended the Polytechnic School. Ultimately a happy compromise was found between duty and inclination. A decision was made in favor of the study of the mental and moral sciences. In 1886, at a third trial, Rolland brilliantly passed the entrance examination to the Normal School. This institution, with its peculiar characteristics and the special historic form of its social life, was to stamp a decisive imprint upon his thought and his destiny.

CHAPTER IV

THE NORMAL SCHOOL

ROLLAND'S childhood was passed amid the rural landscapes of Burgundy. His school life was spent in the roar of Paris. His student years involved a still closer confinement in airless spaces, when he became a boarder at the Normal School. To avoid all distraction, the pupils of this institution are shut away from the world, kept remote from real life, that they may understand historical life the better. Renan, in *Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse*, has given a powerful description of the isolation of budding theologians in the seminary. Embryo army officers are segregated at St. Cyr. In like manner at the Normal School a general staff for the intellectual world is trained in cloistral seclusion. The "normaliens" are to be the teachers of the coming generation. The spirit of tradition unites with stereotyped method, the two breeding in-and-in with fruitful results; the ablest among the scholars will become in turn teachers in the same institution. The training is severe, demanding indefatigable diligence, for its goal is to discipline the intellect. But since it aspires towards universality of culture, the Normal School permits considerable freedom of organiza-

Romain Rolland at the Normal School

tion, and avoids the dangerous over-specialization characteristic of Germany. Not by chance did the most universal spirits of France emanate from the Normal School. We think of such men as Renan, Jaurès, Michelet, Monod, and Rolland.

Although during these years Rolland's chief interest was directed towards philosophy, although he was a diligent student of the pre-Socratic philosophers of ancient Greece, of the Cartesians, and of Spinoza, nevertheless, during the second year of his course, he chose, or was intelligently guided to choose, history and geography as his principal subjects. The choice was a fortunate one, and was decisive for the development of his artistic life. Here he first came to look upon universal history as an eternal ebb and flow of epochs, wherein yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow comprise but a single living entity. He learned to take broad views. He acquired his pre-eminent capacity for vitalizing history. On the other hand, he owes to this same strenuous school of youth his power for contemplating the present from the detachment of a higher cultural sphere. No other imaginative writer of our time possesses anything like so solid a foundation in the form of real and methodical knowledge in all domains. It may well be, moreover, that his incomparable capacity for work was acquired during these years of seclusion.

Here in the Prytaneum (Rolland's life is full of such mystical word plays) the young man found a friend. He also was in the future to be one of the leading spirits of France, one who, like Claudel and Rolland himself,

was not to attain widespread celebrity until the lapse of a quarter of a century. We should err were we to consider it the outcome of pure chance that the three greatest representatives of idealism, of the new poetic faith in France, Paul Claudel, André Suarès, and Charles Péguy, should in their formative years have been intimate friends of Romain Rolland, and that after long years of obscurity they should almost at the same hour have acquired extensive influence over the French nation. In their mutual converse, in their mysterious and ardent faith, were created the elements of a world which was not immediately to become visible through the formless vapors of time. Though not one of these friends had as yet a clear vision of his goal, and though their respective energies were to lead them along widely divergent paths, their mutual reactions strengthened the primary forces of passion and of steadfast earnestness to become a sense of all-embracing world community. They were inspired with an identical mission to devote their lives, renouncing success and pecuniary reward, that by work and appeal they might help to restore to their nation its lost faith. Each one of these four comrades, Rolland, Suarès, Claudel, and Péguy, has from a different intellectual standpoint brought this revival to his nation.

As in the case of Claudel at the Lyceum, so now with Suarès at the Normal School, Rolland was drawn to his friend through the love which they shared for music, and especially for the music of Wagner. A further bond of union was the passion both had for Shakespeare. "This passion," Rolland has written, "was the first link in the

long chain of our friendship. Suarès was then, what he has again become to-day after traversing the numerous phases of a rich and manifold nature, a man of the Renaissance. He had the very soul, the stormy temperament, of that epoch. With his long black hair, his pale face, and his burning eyes, he looked like an Italian painted by Carpaccio or Ghirlandajo. As a school exercise he penned an ode to Cesare Borgia. Shakespeare was his god, as Shakespeare was mine; and we often fought side by side for Shakespeare against our professors." But soon came a new passion which partially replaced that for the great English dramatist. There ensued the "Scythian invasion," an enthusiastic affection for Tolstoi, which was likewise to be lifelong. These young idealists were repelled by the trite naturalism of Zola and Maupassant. They were enthusiasts who looked for life to be sustained at a level of heroic tension. They, like Flaubert and Anatole France, could not rest content with a literature of self gratification and amusement. Now, above these trivialities, was revealed the figure of a messenger of God, of one prepared to devote his life to the ideal. "Our sympathies went out to him. Our love for Tolstoi was able to reconcile all our contradictions. Doubtless each one of us loved him from different motives, for each one of us found himself in the master. But for all of us alike he opened a gate into an infinite universe; for all he was a revelation of life." As always since earliest childhood, Rolland was wholly occupied in the search for ultimate values, for the hero, for the universal artist.

During these years of hard work at the Normal School, Rolland devoured book after book, writing after writing. His teachers, Brunetière, and above all Gabriel Monod, already recognized his peculiar gift for historical description. Rolland was especially enthralled by the branch of knowledge which Jakob Burckhardt had in a sense invented not long before, and to which he had given the name of "history of civilization"—the spiritual picture of an entire era. As regards special epochs, Rolland's interest was notably aroused by the wars of religion, wherein the spiritual elements of faith were permeated with the heroism of personal sacrifice. Thus early do the motifs of all his creative work shape themselves! He drafted a whole series of studies, and simultaneously planned a more ambitious work, a history of the heroic epoch of Catherine de Medici. In the scientific field, too, our student was boldly attacking ultimate problems, drinking in ideas thirstily from all the streamlets and rivers of philosophy, natural science, logic, music, and the history of art. But the burden of these acquirements was no more able to crush the poet in him than the weight of a tree is able to crush its roots. During stolen hours he made essays in poetry and music, which, however, he has always kept hidden from the world. In the year 1888, before leaving the Normal School to face the experiences of actual life, he wrote *Credo quia verum*. This is a remarkable document, a spiritual testament, a moral and philosophical confession. It remains unpublished, but a friend of Rolland's youth assures us that it contains the essential elements of his untrammeled

outlook on the world. Conceived in the Spinozist spirit, based not upon "Cogito ergo sum" but upon "Cogito ergo est," it builds up the world, and thereon establishes its god. For himself accountable to himself alone, he is to be freed in future from the need for metaphysical speculation. As if it were a sacred oath, duly sworn, he henceforward bears this confession with him into the struggle; if he but remain true to himself, he will be true to his vow. The foundations have been deeply dug and firmly laid. It is time now to begin the superstructure.

Such were his activities during these years of study. But through them there already looms a dream, the dream of a romance, the history of a single-hearted artist who bruises himself against the rocks of life. Here we have the larval stage of *Jean Christophe,* the first twilit sketch of the work to come. But much weaving of destiny, many encounters, and an abundance of ordeals will be requisite, ere the multicolored and impressive imago will emerge from the obscurity of these first intimations.

CHAPTER V

A MESSAGE FROM AFAR

SCHOOL days were over. The old problem concerning the choice of profession came up anew for discussion. Although science had proved enriching, although it had aroused enthusiasm, it had by no means fulfilled the young artist's cherished dream. More than ever his longings turned towards imaginative literature and towards music. His most ardent ambition was still to join the ranks of those whose words and melodies unlock men's souls; he aspired to become a creator, a consoler. But life seemed to demand orderly forms, discipline instead of freedom, an occupation instead of a mission. The young man, now two-and-twenty years of age, stood undecided at the parting of the ways.

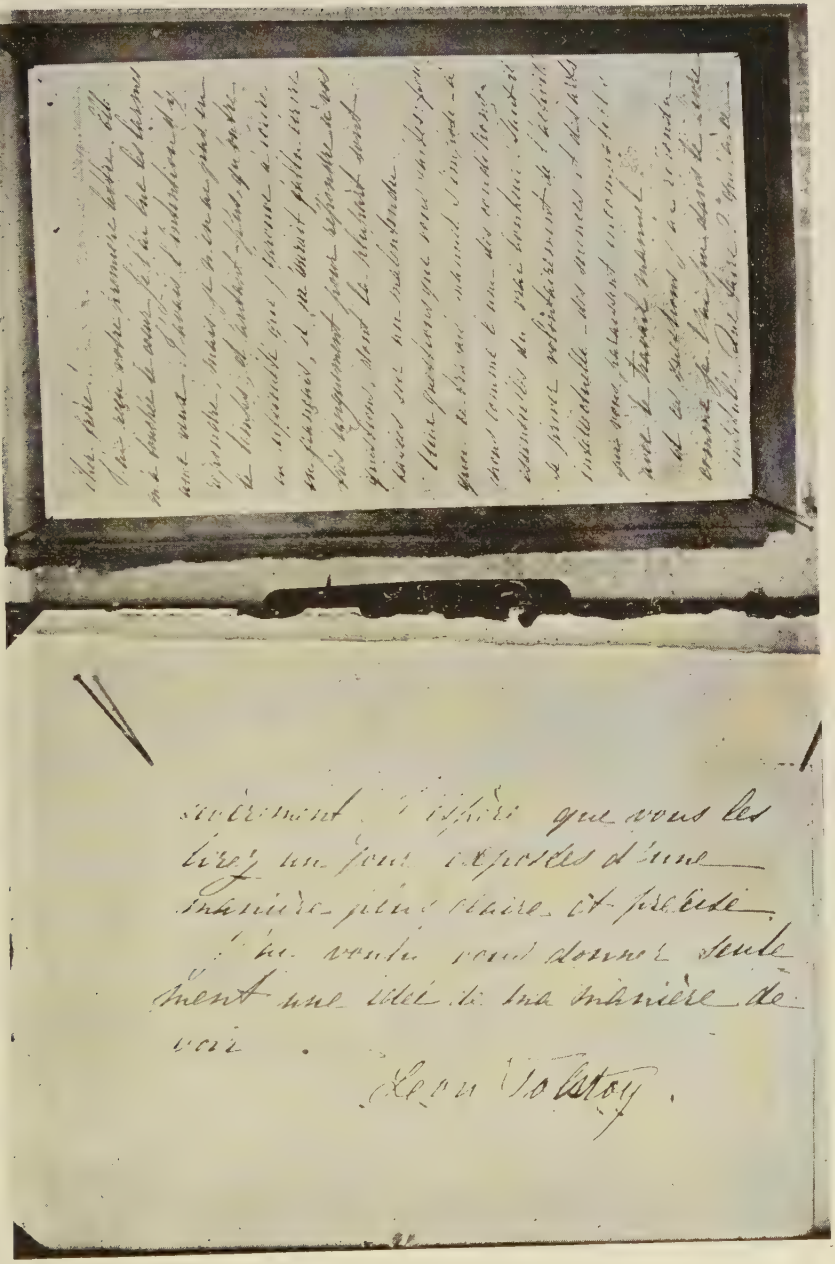
Then came a message from afar, a message from the beloved hand of Leo Tolstoi. The whole generation honored the Russian as a leader, looked up to him as the embodied symbol of truth. In this year was published Tolstoi's booklet *What is to be Done?*, containing a fierce indictment of art. Contemptuously he shattered all that was dearest to Rolland. Beethoven, to whom the young Frenchman daily addressed a fervent prayer, was termed a seducer to sensuality. Shakespeare was a poet of the

fourth rank, a wastrel. The whole of modern art was swept away like chaff from the threshing-floor; the heart's holy of holies was cast into outer darkness. This tract, which rang through Europe, could be dismissed with a smile by those of an older generation; but for the young men who revered Tolstoi as their one hope in a lying and cowardly age, it stormed through their consciences like a hurricane. The bitter necessity was forced upon them of choosing between Beethoven and the holy one of their hearts. Writing of this hour, Rolland says: "The goodness, the sincerity, the absolute straightforwardness of this man made of him for me an infallible guide in the prevailing moral anarchy. But at the same time, from childhood's days, I had passionately loved art. Music, in especial, was my daily food; I do not exaggerate in saying that to me music was as much a necessary of life as bread." Yet this very music was stigmatized by Tolstoi, the beloved teacher, the most human of men; was decried as "an enjoyment that leads men to neglect duty." Tolstoi contemned the Ariel of the soul as a seducer to sensuality. What was to be done? The young man's heart was racked. Was he to follow the sage of Yasnaya Polyana, to cut away from his life all will to art; or was he to follow the innermost call which would lead him to transfuse the whole of his life with music and poesy? He must perforce be unfaithful, either to the most venerated among artists, or to art itself; either to the most beloved among men or to the most beloved among ideas.

In this state of mental cleavage, the student now

formed an amazing resolve. Sitting down one day in his little attic, he wrote a letter to be sent into the remote distances of Russia, a letter describing to Tolstoi the doubts that perplexed his conscience. He wrote as those who despair pray to God, with no hope for a miracle, no expectation of an answer, but merely to satisfy the burning need for confession. Weeks elapsed, and Rolland had long since forgotten his hour of impulse. But one evening, returning to his room, he found upon the table a small packet. It was Tolstoi's answer to the unknown correspondent, thirty-eight pages written in French, an entire treatise. This letter of October 14, 1887, subsequently published by Péguy as No. 4 of the third series of "*Cahiers de la quinzaine*," began with the affectionate words, "Cher Frère." First was announced the profound impression produced upon the great man, to whose heart this cry for help had struck. "I have received your first letter. It has touched me to the heart. I have read it with tears in my eyes." Tolstoi went on to expound his ideas upon art. That alone is of value, he said, which binds men together; the only artist who counts is the artist who makes a sacrifice for his convictions. The precondition of every true calling must be, not love for art, but love for mankind. Those only who are filled with such a love can hope that they will ever be able, as artists, to do anything worth doing.

These words exercised a decisive influence upon the future of Romain Rolland. But the doctrine summarized above has been expounded by Tolstoi often enough,



Leo Tolstoi's Letter

and expounded more clearly. What especially affected our novice was the proof of the sage's readiness to give human help. Far more than by the words was Rolland moved by the kindly deed of Tolstoi. This man of world-wide fame, responding to the appeal of a nameless and unknown youth, a student in a back street of Paris, had promptly laid aside his own labors, had devoted a whole day, or perhaps two days, to the task of answering and consoling his unknown brother. For Rolland this was a vital experience, a deep and creative experience. The remembrance of his own need, the remembrance of the help then received from a foreign thinker, taught him to regard every crisis of conscience as something sacred, and to look upon the rendering of aid as the artist's primary moral duty. From the day he opened Tolstoi's letter, he himself became the great helper, the brotherly adviser. His whole work, his human authority, found its beginnings here. Never since then, however pressing the demands upon his time, has he failed to bear in mind the help he received. Never has he refused to render help to any unknown person appealing out of a genuinely troubled conscience. From Tolstoi's letter sprang countless Rollands, bringing aid and counsel throughout the years. Henceforward, poesy was to him a sacred trust, one which he has fulfilled in the name of his master. Rarely has history borne more splendid witness to the fact that in the moral sphere no less than in the physical, force never runs to waste. The hour when Tolstoi wrote to his unknown correspondent has

been revived in a thousand letters from Rolland to a thousand unknowns. An infinite quantity of seed is to-day wafted through the world, seed that has sprung from this single grain of kindness.

CHAPTER VI

ROME

FROM every quarter, voices were calling: the French homeland, German music, Tolstoi's exhortation, Shakespeare's ardent appeal, the will to art, the need for earning a livelihood. While Rolland was still hesitating, his decision had again to be postponed through the intervention of chance, the eternal friend of artists.

Every year the Normal School provides traveling scholarships for some of its best pupils. The term is two years. Archeologists are sent to Greece, historians to Rome. Rolland had no strong desire for such a mission; he was too eager to face the realities of life. But fate is apt to stretch forth her hand to those who are coy. Two of his fellow students had refused the Roman scholarship, and Rolland was chosen to fill the vacancy almost against his will. To his inexperience, Rome still seemed nothing more than dead past, a history in shreds and patches, a dull record which he would have to piece together from inscriptions and parchments. It was a school task; an imposition, not life. Scanty were his expectations when he set forth on pilgrimage to the eternal city.

The duty imposed on him was to arrange documents in the gloomy Farnese Pallace, to cull history from registers and books. For a brief space he paid due tribute to this service, and in the archives of the Vatican he compiled a memoir upon the nuncio Salviati and the sack of Rome. But ere long his attention was concentrated upon the living alone. His mind was flooded by the wonderfully clear light of the Campagna, which reduces all things to a self-evident harmony, making life appear simple and giving it the aspect of pure sensation. For many, the gentle grace of the artist's promised land exercises an irresistible charm. The memorials of the Renaissance issue to the wanderer a summons to greatness. In Italy, more strongly than elsewhere, does it seem that art is the meaning of human life, and that art must be man's heroic aim. Throwing aside his theses, the young man of twenty, intoxicated with the adventure of love and of life, wandered for months in blissful freedom through the lesser cities of Italy and Sicily. Even Tolstoi was forgotten, for in this region of sensuous presentation, in the dazzling south, the voice from the Russian steppes, demanding renunciation, fell upon deaf ears. Of a sudden, however, Shakespeare, friend and guide of Rolland's childhood, resumed his sway. A cycle of the Shakespearean dramas, presented by Ernesto Rossi, displayed to him the splendor of elemental passion, and aroused an irresistible longing to transfigure, like Shakespeare, history in poetic form. He was moving day by day among the stone witnesses to the greatness of past centuries. He would recall those cen-

turies to life. The poet in him awakened. In cheerful faithlessness to his mission, he penned a series of dramas, catching them on the wing with that burning ecstacy which inspiration, coming unawares, invariably arouses in the artist. Just as England is presented in Shakespeare's historical plays, so was the whole Renaissance epoch to be reflected in his own writings. Light of heart, in the intoxication of composition he penned one play after another, without concerning himself as to the earthly possibilities for staging them. Not one of these romanticist dramas has, in fact, ever been performed. Not one of them is to-day accessible to the public. The maturer critical sense of the artist has made him hide them from the world. He has a fondness for the faded manuscripts simply as memorials of the ardors of youth.

The most momentous experience of these years spent in Italy was the formation of a new friendship. Rolland never sought people out. In essence he is a solitary, one who loves best to live among his books. Yet from the mystical and symbolical outlook it is characteristic of his biography that each epoch of his youth brought him into contact with one or other of the leading personalities of the day. In accordance with the mysterious laws of attraction, he has been drawn ever and again into the heroic sphere, has associated with the mighty ones of the earth. Shakespeare, Mozart, and Beethoven were the stars of his childhood. During school life, Suarès and Claudel became his intimates. As a student, in an hour when he was needing the help of sages, he followed Renan; Spinoza freed his mind in matters of religion;

from afar came the brotherly greeting of Tolstoi. In Rome, through a letter of introduction from Monod, he made the acquaintance of Malwida von Meysenbug, whose whole life had been a contemplation of the heroic past. Wagner, Nietzsche, Mazzini, Herzen, and Kossuth were her perennial intimates. For this free spirit, the barriers of nationality and language did not exist. No revolution in art or politics could affright her. "A human magnet," she exercised an irresistible appeal upon great natures. When Rolland met her she was already an old woman, a lucid intelligence, untroubled by disillusionment, still an idealist as in youth. From the height of her seventy years, she looked down over the past, serene and wise. A wealth of knowledge and experience streamed from her mind to that of the learner. Rolland found in her the same gentle illumination, the same sublime repose after passion, which had endeared the Italian landscape to his mind. Just as from the monuments and pictures of Italy he could reconstruct the figures of the Renaissance heroes, so from Malwida's confidential talk could he reconstruct the tragedy in the lives of the artists she had known. In Rome he learned a just and loving appreciation for the genius of the present. His new friend taught him what in truth he had long ere this learned unawares from within, that there is a lofty level of thought and sensation where nations and languages become as one in the universal tongue of art. During a walk on the Janiculum, a vision came to him of the work of European scope he was one day to write, the vision of *Jean Christophe.*

Wonderful was the friendship between the old German woman and the Frenchman of twenty-three. Soon it became difficult for either of them to say which was more indebted to the other. Romain owed so much to Malwida, in that she had enabled him to form juster views of some of her great contemporaries; while Malwida valued Romain, because in this enthusiastic young artist she discerned new possibilities of greatness. The same idealism animated both, tried and chastened in the many-wintered woman, fiery and impetuous in the youth. Every day Rolland came to visit his venerable friend in the Via della Polveriera, playing to her on the piano the works of his favorite masters. She, in turn, introduced him to Roman society. Gently guiding his restless nature, she led him towards spiritual freedom. In his essay *To the Undying Antigone*, Rolland tells us that to two women, his mother, a sincere Christian, and Malwida von Meysenbug, a pure idealist, he owes his awakening to the full significance of art and of life. Malwida, writing in *Der Lebens Abend einer Idealistin* a quarter of a century before Rolland had attained celebrity, expressed her confident belief in his coming fame. We cannot fail to be moved when we read to-day the description of Rolland in youth: "My friendship with this young man was a great pleasure to me in other respects besides that of music. For those advanced in years, there can be no loftier gratification than to rediscover in the young the same impulse towards idealism, the same striving towards the highest aims, the same contempt for all that is vulgar or trivial, the same courage in the strug-

gle for freedom of individuality . . . For two years I enjoyed the intellectual companionship of young Rolland . . . Let me repeat, it was not from his musical talent alone that my pleasure was derived, though here he was able to fill what had long been a gap in my life. In other intellectual fields I found him likewise congenial. He aspired to the fullest possible development of his faculties; whilst I myself, in his stimulating presence, was able to revive youthfulness of thought, to rediscover an intense interest in the whole world of imaginative beauty. As far as poesy is concerned, I gradually became aware of the greatness of my young friend's endowments, to be finally convinced of the fact by the reading of one of his dramatic poems." Speaking of this early work, she prophetically declared that the writer's moral energy might well be expected to bring about a regeneration of French imaginative literature. In a poem, finely conceived but a trifle sentimental, she expressed her thankfulness for the experience of these two years. Malwida had recognized Romain as her European brother, just as Tolstoi had recognized a disciple. Twenty years before the world had heard of Rolland, his life was moving on heroic paths. Greatness cannot be hid. When any one is born to greatness, the past and the present send him images and figures to serve as exhortation and example. From every country and from every race of Europe, voices rise to greet the man who is one day to speak for them all.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONSECRATION

THE two years in Italy, a time of free receptivity and creative enjoyment, were over. A summons now came from Paris; the Normal School, which Rolland had left as pupil, required his services as teacher. The parting was a wrench, and Malwida von Meysenbug's farewell was designed to convey a symbolical meaning. She invited her young friend to accompany her to Bayreuth, the chief sphere of the activities of the man who, with Tolstoi, had been the leading inspiration of Rolland during early youth, the man whose image had been endowed with more vigorous life by Malwida's memories of his personality. Rolland wandered on foot across Umbria, to meet his friend in Venice. Together they visited the palace in which Wagner had died, and thence journeyed northward to the scene of his life's work. "My aim," writes Malwida in her characteristic style, which seldom attains strong emotional force, but is none the less moving, "was that Romain should have these sublime impressions to close his years in Italy and the fecund epoch of youth. I likewise wished the experience to be a consecration upon the threshold of manhood, with its prospective labors and its inevitable struggles and disillusionments."

Olivier had entered the country of Jean Christophe! On the first morning of their arrival, before introducing her friend at Wahnfried, Malwida took him into the garden to see the master's grave. Rolland uncovered as if in church, and the two stood for a while in silence meditating on the hero, to one of them a friend, to the other a leader. In the evening they went to hear Wagner's posthumous work *Parsifal*. This composition, which, like the visit to Bayreuth, is strangely interconnected with the genesis of *Jean Christophe*, is as it were a consecrational prelude to Rolland's future. For life was now to call him from these great dreams. Malwida gives a moving description of their good-by. "My friends had kindly placed their box at my disposal. Once more I went to hear *Parsifal* with Rolland, who was about to return to France in order to play an active part in the work of life. It was a matter of deep regret to me that this gifted friend was not free to lift himself to 'higher spheres,' that he could not ripen from youth to manhood while wholly devoted to the unfolding of his artistic impulses. But I knew that none the less he would work at the roaring loom of time, weaving the living garment of divinity. The tears with which his eyes were filled at the close of the opera made me feel once more that my faith in him would be justified. Thus I bade him farewell with heartfelt thanks for the time filled with poesy which his talents had bestowed on me. I dismissed him with the blessing that age gives to youth entering upon life."

Although an epoch that had been rich for both was now closed, their friendship was by no means over. For

years to come, down to the end of her life, Rolland wrote to Malwida once a week. These letters, which were returned to him after her death, contain a biography of his early manhood perhaps fuller than that which is available in the case of any other notable personality. Inestimable was the value of what he had learned from this encounter. He had now acquired an extensive knowledge of reality and an unlimited sense of human continuity. Whereas he had gone to Rome to study the art of the dead past, he had found the living Germany, and could enjoy the companionship of her undying heroes. The triad of poesy, music, and science, harmonizes unconsciously with that other triad, France, Germany, and Italy. Once and for all, Rolland had acquired the European spirit. Before he had written a line of *Jean Christophe*, that great epic was already living in his blood.

CHAPTER VIII

YEARS OF APPRENTICESHIP

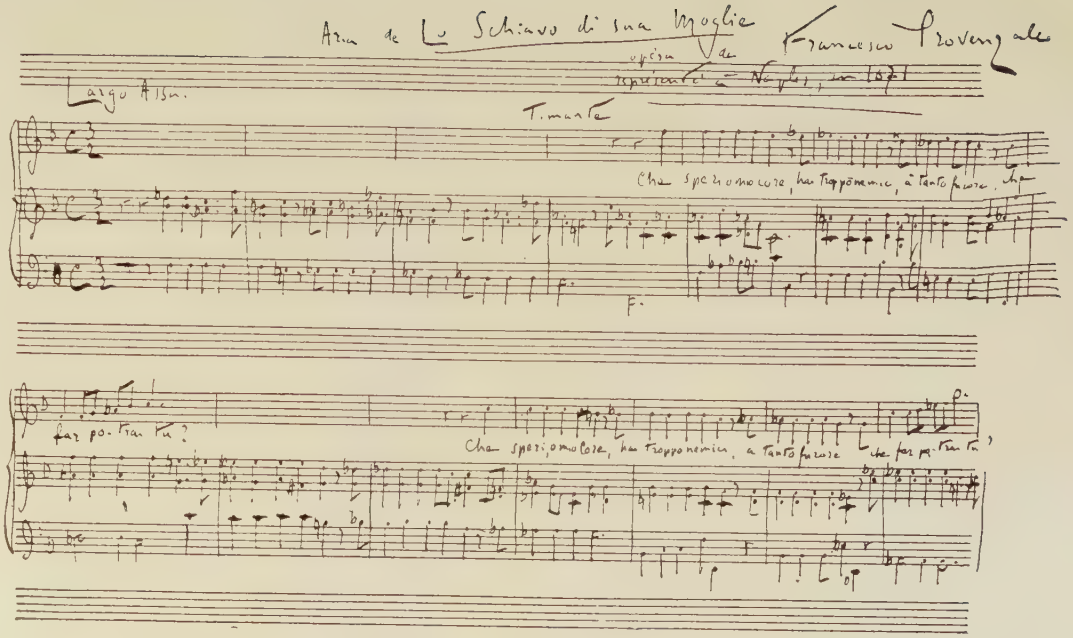
THE form of Rolland's career, no less than the substance of his inner life, was decisively fashioned by these two years in Italy. As happened in Goethe's case, so in that with which we are now concerned, the conflict of the will was harmonized amid the sublime clarity of the southern landscape. Rolland had gone to Rome with his mind still undecided. By genius, he was a musician; by inclination, a poet; by necessity, a historian. Little by little, a magical union had been effected between music and poesy. In his first dramas, the phrasing is permeated with lyrical melody. Simultaneously, behind the winged words, his historic sense had built up a mighty scene out of the rich hues of the past. After the success of his thesis *Les origines du théatre lyrique moderns* (*Histoire de l'opéra en Europe avant Lully et Scarlatti*), he became professor of the history of music, first at the Normal School, and from 1903 onwards at the Sorbonne. The aim he set before himself was to display *"l'éternelle floraison,"* the sempiternal blossoming, of music as an endless series through the ages, while each age none the less puts forth its own characteristic shoots. Discovering for the first time what

was to be henceforward his favorite theme, he showed how, in this apparently abstract sphere, the nations cultivate their individual characteristics, while never ceasing to develop unawares the higher unity wherein time and national differences are unknown. A great power for understanding others, in association with the faculty for writing so as to be readily understood, constitutes the essence of his activities. Here, moreover, in the element with which he was most familiar, his emotional force was singularly effective. More than any teacher before him did he make the science he had to convey, a living thing. Dealing with the invisible entity of music, he showed that the greatness of mankind is never concentrated in a single age, nor exclusively allotted to a single nation, but is transmitted from age to age and from nation to nation. Thus like a torch does it pass from one master to another, a torch that will never be extinguished while human beings continue to draw the breath of inspiration. There are no contradictions, there is no cleavage, in art. "History must take for its object the living unity of the human spirit. Consequently, history is compelled to maintain the tie between all the thoughts of the human spirit."

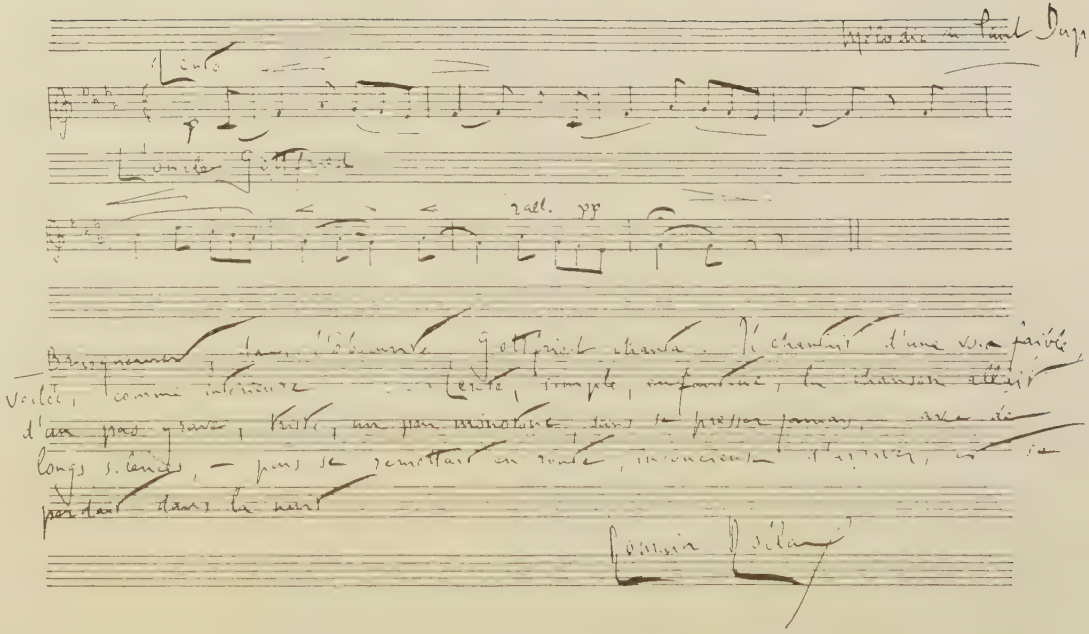
Many of those who heard Rolland's lectures at the School of Social Science and at the Sorbonne, still speak of them to-day with undiminished gratitude. Only in a formal sense was history the topic of these discourses, and science was merely their foundation. It is true that Rolland, side by side with his universal reputation, has a reputation among specialists in musical research for having discovered the manuscript of Luigi Rossi's *Orfeo*,

and for having been the first to do justice to the forgotten Francesco Provenzale (the teacher of Alessandro Scarlatti who founded the Neapolitan school). But their broad humanist scope, their encyclopedic outlook, makes his lectures on *The Beginnings of Opera* frescoes of whilom civilizations. In interludes of speaking, he would give music voice, playing on the piano long-lost airs, so that in the very Paris where they first blossomed three hundred years before, their silvery tones were now reawakened from dust and parchment. At this date, while Rolland was still quite young, he began to exercise upon his fellows that clarifying, guiding, inspiring, and formative influence, which since then, increasingly reinforced by the power of his imaginative writings and spread by these into ever widening circles, has become immeasurable in its extent. Nevertheless, throughout its expansion, this force has remained true to its primary aim. From first to last, Rolland's leading thought has been to display, amid all the forms of man's past and man's present, the things that are really great in human personality, and the unity of all single-hearted endeavor.

It is obvious that Romain Rolland's passion for music could not be restricted within the confines of history. He could never become a specialist. The limitations involved in the career of such experts are utterly uncongenial to his synthetic temperament. For him the past s but a preparation for the present; what has been merely provides the possibility for increasing comprehension of the future. Thus side by side with his learned theses and with his volumes *Musiciens d'autrefois, Haendel,*


Aria de Lo Schiavo di sua Moglie
Francesco Provenzale
Largo Assai.
T.mare
Che sperimonvole, ha troppo nemici, à tanto furore
far portar?
Che sperimonvole, ha troppo nemici, à tanto furore che far portar?

Rolland's transcript of Francesco Provenzale's Aria from *Lo Schiaro di sua Moglie*



Rolland's transcript of a melody by Paul Dupin, *L'Oncle Gottfried*

Histoire de l'Opéra, etc., we have his *Musiciens d'aujourd'hui,* a collection of essays which were first published in the *"Revue de Paris"* and the *"Revue de l'art dramatique,"* essays penned by Rolland as champion of the modern and the unknown. This collection contains the first portrait of Hugo Wolf ever published in France, together with striking presentations of Richard Strauss and Debussy. He was never weary of looking for new creative forces in European music; he went to the Strasburg musical festival to hear Gustav Mahler, and visited Bonn to attend the Beethoven festival. Nothing seemed alien to his eager pursuit of knowledge; his sense of justice was all-embracing. From Catalonia to Scandinavia he listened for every new wave in the ocean of music. He was no less at home with the spirit of the present than with the spirit of the past.

During these years of activity as teacher, he learned much from life. New circles were opened to him in the Paris which hitherto he had known little of except from the window of his lonely study. His position at the university and his marriage brought the man who had hitherto associated only with a few intimates and with distant heroes, into contact with intellectual and social life. In the house of his father-in-law, the distinguished philologist Michel Bréal, he became acquainted with the leading lights of the Sorbonne. Elsewhere, in the drawing-rooms, he moved among financiers, bourgeois, officials, persons drawn from all strata of city life, including the cosmopolitans who are always to be found in Paris. Involuntarily, during these years, Rolland the

romanticist became an observer. His idealism, without forfeiting intensity, gained critical strength. The experiences garnered (it might be better to say, the disillusionments sustained) in these contacts, all this medley of commonplace life, were to form the basis of his subsequent descriptions of the Parisian world in *La foire sur la place* and *Dans la maison.* Occasional journeys to Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and his beloved Italy, gave him opportunities for comparison, and provided fresh knowledge. More and more, the growing horizon of modern culture came to occupy his thoughts, thus displacing the science of history. The wanderer returned from Europe had discovered his home, had discovered Paris; the historian had found the most important epoch for living men and women—the present.

CHAPTER IX

YEARS OF STRUGGLE

ROLLAND was now a man of thirty, with his energies at their prime. He was inspired with a restrained passion for activity. In all times and scenes, alike in the past and in the present, his inspiration discerned greatness. The impulse now grew strong within him to give his imaginings life.

But this will to greatness encountered a season of petty things. At the date when Rolland began his life work, the mighty figures of French literature had already passed from the stage: Victor Hugo, with his indefatigable summons to idealism; Flaubert, the heroic worker; Renan, the sage. The stars of the neighboring heaven, Richard Wagner and Friedrich Nietzsche, had set or become obscured. Extant art, even the serious art of a Zola or a Maupassant, was devoted to the commonplace; it created only in the image of a corrupt and enfeebled generation. Political life had become paltry and supine. Philosophy was stereotyped and abstract. There was no longer any common bond to unite the elements of the nation, for its faith had been shattered for decades to come by the defeat of 1870. Rolland aspired to bold ventures, but his world would have none of them. He

was a fighter, but his world desired an easy life. He wanted fellowship, but all that his world wanted was enjoyment.

Suddenly a storm burst over the country. France was stirred to the depths. The entire nation became engrossed in an intellectual and moral problem. Rolland, a bold swimmer, was one of the first to leap into the turbulent flood. Betwixt night and morning, the Dreyfus affair rent France in twain. There were no abstentionists; there was no calm contemplation. The finest among Frenchmen were the hottest partisans. For two years the country was severed as by a knife blade into two camps, that of those whose verdict was "guilty," and that of those whose verdict was "not guilty." In *Jean Christophe* and in Péguy's reminiscences, we learn how the section cut pitilessly athwart families, dividing brother from brother, father from son, friend from friend. Today we find it difficult to understand how this accusation of espionage brought against an artillery captain could involve all France in a crisis. The passions aroused transcended the immediate cause to invade the whole sphere of mental life. Every Frenchman was faced by a problem of conscience, was compelled to make a decision between fatherland and justice. Thus with explosive energy the moral forces were, for all right-thinking minds, dragged into the vortex. Rolland was among the few who from the very outset insisted that Dreyfus was innocent. The apparent hopelessness of these early endeavors to secure justice were for Rolland a spur to conscience. Whereas Péguy was enthralled by the mys-

tical power of the problem, which would he hoped bring about a moral purification of his country, and while in conjunction with Bernard Lazare he wrote propagandist pamphlets calculated to add fuel to the flames, Rolland's energies were devoted to the consideration of the immanent problem of justice. Under the pseudonym Saint-Just he published a dramatic parable, *Les loups*, wherein he lifted the problem from the realm of time into the realm of the eternal. This was played to an enthusiastic audience, among which were Zola, Scheurer-Kestner, and Picquart. The more definitely political the trial became, the more evident was it that the freemasons, the anti-clericalists, and the socialists were using the affair to secure their own ends; and the more the question of material success replaced the question of the ideal, the more did Rolland withdraw from active participation. His enthusiasm is devoted only to spiritual matters, to problems, to lost causes. In the Dreyfus affair, just as later, it was his glory to have been one of the first to take up arms, and to have been a solitary champion in a historic moment.

Simultaneously, Rolland was working shoulder to shoulder with Péguy, and with Suarès the friend of his adolescence, in a new campaign. This differed from the championship of Dreyfus in that it was not stormy and clamorous, but involved a tranquil heroism which made it resemble rather the way of the cross. The friends were painfully aware of the corruption and triviality of the literature then dominant in Paris. To attempt a direct attack would have been fruitless, for

this hydra had the whole periodical press at its service. Nowhere was it possible to inflict a mortal blow upon the many-headed and thousand-armed entity. They resolved, therefore, to work against it, not with its own means, not by imitating its own noisy activities, but by the force of moral example, by quiet sacrifice and invincible patience. For fifteen years they wrote and edited the "*Cahiers de la quinzaine.*" Not a centime was spent on advertising it, and it was rarely to be found on sale at any of the usual agents. It was read by students and by a few men of letters, by a small circle growing imperceptibly. Throughout an entire decade, all Rolland's works appeared in its pages, the whole of *Jean Christophe*, *Beethoven*, *Michel-Ange*, and the plays. Though during this epoch the author's financial position was far from easy, he received nothing for any of these writings—the case is perhaps unexampled in modern literature. To fortify their idealism, to set an example to others, these heroic figures renounced the chance of publicity, circulation, and remuneration for their writings; they renounced the holy trinity of the literary faith. And when at length, through Rolland's, Péguy's, and Suarès' tardily achieved fame, the "Cahiers" had come into its own, its publication was discontinued. But it remains an imperishable monument of French idealism and artistic comradeship.

A third time Rolland's intellectual ardor led him to try his mettle in the field of action. A third time, for a space, did he enter into a comradeship that he might fashion life out of life. A group of young men had

come to recognize the futility and harmfulness of the French boulevard drama, whose central topic is the eternal recurrence of adultery issuing from the tedium of bourgeois existence. They determined upon an attempt to restore the drama to the people, to the proletariat, and thus to furnish it with new energies. Impetuously Rolland threw himself into the scheme, writing essays, manifestoes, an entire book. Above all, he contributed a series of plays conceived in the spirit of the French revolution and composed for its glorification. Jaurès delivered a speech introducing *Danton* to the French workers. The other plays were likewise staged. But the daily press, obviously scenting a hostile force, did its utmost to chill the enthusiasm. The other participators soon lost their zeal, so that ere long the fine impetus of the young group was spent. Rolland was left alone, richer in experience and disillusionment, but not poorer in faith.

Although by sentiment Rolland is attached to all great movements, the inner man has ever remained free from ties. He gives his energies to help others' efforts, but never follows blindly in others' footsteps. Whatever creative work he has attempted in common with others has been a disappointment; the fellowship has been clouded by the universality of human frailty. The Dreyfus case was subordinated to political scheming; the People's Theater was wrecked by jealousies; Rolland's plays, written for the workers, were staged but for a night; his wedded life came to a sudden and disastrous end—but nothing could shatter his idealism. When

contemporary existence could not be controlled by the forces of the spirit, he still retained his faith in the spirit. In hours of disillusionment he called up the images of the great ones of the earth, who conquered mourning by action, who conquered life by art. He left the theater, he renounced the professorial chair, he retired from the world. Since life repudiated his single-hearted endeavors he would transfigure life in gracious pictures. His disillusionments had but been further experience. During the ensuing ten years of solitude he wrote *Jean Christophe*, a work which in the ethical sense is more truly real than reality itself, a work which embodies the living faith of his generation.

CHAPTER X

A DECADE OF SECLUSION

FOR a brief season the Parisian public was familiar with Romain Rolland's name as that of a musical expert and a promising dramatist. Thereafter for years he disappeared from view, for the capital of France excels all others in its faculty for merciless forgetfulness. He was never spoken of even in literary circles, although poets and other men of letters might be expected to be the best judges of the values in which they deal. If the curious reader should care to turn over the reviews and anthologies of the period, to examine the histories of literature, he will find not a word of the man who had already written a dozen plays, had composed wonderful biographies, and had published six volumes of *Jean Christophe*. The "*Cahiers de la quinzaine*" were at once the birthplace and the tomb of his writings. He was a stranger in the city at the very time when he was describing its mental life with a picturesqueness and comprehensiveness which has never been equaled. At forty years of age, he had won neither fame nor pecuniary reward; he seemed to possess no influence; he was not a living force. At the opening of the twentieth century, like Charles Louis

Philippe, like Verhaeren, like Claudel, and like Suarès, in truth the strongest writers of the time, Rolland remained unrecognized when he was at the zenith of his creative powers. In his own person he experienced the fate which he has depicted in such moving terms, the tragedy of French idealism.

A period of seclusion is, however, needful as a preliminary to labors of such concentration. Force must develop in solitude before it can capture the world. Only a man prepared to ignore the public, only a man animated with heroic indifference to success, could venture upon the forlorn hope of planning a romance in ten volumes; a French romance which, in an epoch of exacerbated nationalism, was to have a German for its hero. In such detachment alone could this universality of knowledge shape itself into a literary creation. Nowhere but aimd tranquillity undisturbed by the noise of the crowd could a work of such vast scope be brought to fruition.

For a decade Rolland seemed to have vanished from the French literary world. Mystery enveloped him, the mystery of toil. Through all these long years his cloistered labors represented the hidden stage of the chrysalis, from which the imago is to issue in winged glory. It was a period of much suffering, a period of silence, a period characterized by knowledge of the world—the knowledge of a man whom the world did not yet know.

CHAPTER XI

A PORTRAIT

TWO tiny little rooms, attic rooms in the heart of Paris, on the fifth story, reached by a winding wooden stair. From below comes the muffled roar, as of a distant storm, rising from the Boulevard Montparnasse. Often a glass shakes on the table as a heavy motor omnibus thunders by. The windows command a view across less lofty houses into an old convent garden. In springtime the perfume of flowers is wafted through the open window. No neighbors on this story; no service. Nothing beyond the help of the concierge, an old woman who protects the hermit from untimely visitors.

The workroom is full of books. They climb up the walls, and are piled in heaps on the floor; they spread like creepers over the window seat, over the chairs and the table. Interspersed are manuscripts. The walls are adorned with a few engravings. We see photographs of friends, and a bust of Beethoven. The deal table stands near the window; two chairs, a small stove. Nothing costly in the narrow cell; nothing which could tempt to repose; nothing to encourage sociability. A student's den; a little prison of labor.

Amid the books sits the gentle monk of this cell, soberly clad like a clergyman. He is slim, tall, delicate looking; his complexion is sallow, like that of one who is rarely in the open. His face is lined, suggesting that here is a worker who spends few hours in sleep. His whole aspect is somewhat fragile—the sharply-cut profile which no photograph seems to reproduce perfectly; the small hands, his hair silvering already behind the lofty brow; his moustache falling softly like a shadow over the thin lips. Everything about him is gentle: his voice in its rare utterances; his figure which, even in repose, shows the traces of his sedentary life; his gestures, which are always restrained; his slow gait. His whole personality radiates gentleness. The casual observer might derive the impression that the man is debilitated or extremely fatigued, were it not for the way in which the eyes flash ever and again from beneath the slightly reddened eyelids, to relapse always into their customary expression of kindliness. The eyes have a blue tint as of deep waters of exceptional purity. That is why no photograph can convey a just impression of one in whose eyes the whole force of his soul seems to be concentrated. The face is inspired with life by the glance, just as the small and frail body radiates the mysterious energy of work.

This work, the unceasing labor of a spirit imprisoned in a body, imprisoned within narrow walls during all these years, who can measure it? The written books are but a fraction of it. The ardor of our recluse is all-embracing, reaching forth to include the cultures of

every tongue, the history, philosophy, poesy, and music of every nation. He is in touch with all endeavors. He receives sketches, letters, and reviews concerning everything. He is one who thinks as he writes, speaking to himself and to others while his pen moves over the paper. With his small, upright handwriting in which all the letters are clearly and powerfully formed, he permanently fixes the thoughts that pass through his mind, whether spontaneously arising or coming from without; he records the airs of past and recent times, noting them down in manuscript books; he makes extracts from newspapers, drafts plans for future work; his thriftily collected hoard of these autographic intellectual goods is enormous. The flame of his labor burns unceasingly. Rarely does he take more than five hours' sleep; seldom does he go for a stroll in the adjoining Luxembourg; infrequently does a friend climb the five flights of winding stair for an hour's quiet talk; even such journeys as he undertakes are mostly for purposes of research. Repose signifies for him a change of occupation; to write letters instead of books, to read philosophy instead of poetry. His solitude is an active communing with the world. His free hours are his only holiday, stolen from the long days when he sits in the twilight at the piano, holding converse with the great masters of music, drawing melodies from other worlds into this confined space which is itself a world of the creative spirit.

CHAPTER XII

RENOWN

WE are in the year 1910. A motor is tearing along the Champs Elysées, outrunning the belated warnings of its own hooter. There is a cry, and a man who was incautiously crossing the street lies beneath the wheels. He is borne away wounded and with broken limbs, to be nursed back to life.

Nothing can better exemplify the slenderness, as yet, of Romain Rolland's fame, than the reflection how little his death at this juncture would have signified to the literary world. There would have been a paragraph or two in the newspapers informing the public that the sometime professor of musical history at the Sorbonne had succumbed after being run over by a motor. A few, perhaps, would have remembered that fifteen years earlier this man Rolland had written promising dramas, and books on musical topics. Among the innumerable inhabitants of Paris, scarce a handful would have known anything of the deceased author. Thus ignored was Romain Rolland two years before he obtained a European reputation; thus nameless was he when he had finished most of the works which were to make him a leader of

our generation—the dozen or so dramas, the biographies of the heroes, and the first eight volumes of *Jean Christophe.*

A wonderful thing is fame, wonderful its eternal multiplicity. Every reputation has peculiar characteristics, independent of the man to whom it attaches, and yet appertaining to him as his destiny. Fame may be wise and it may be foolish; it may be deserved and it may be undeserved. On the one hand it may be easily attained and brief, flashing transiently like a meteor; on the other hand it may be tardy, slow in blossoming, following reluctantly in the footsteps of the works. Sometimes fame is malicious, ghoulish, arriving too late, and battening upon corpses.

Strange is the relationship between Rolland and fame. From early youth he was allured by its magic; but charmed by the thought of the only reputation that counts, the reputation that is based upon moral strength and ethical authority, he proudly and steadfastly renounced the ordinary amenities of cliquism and conventional intercourse. He knew the dangers and temptations of power; he knew that fussy activity could grasp nothing but a cold shadow, and was impotent to seize the radiant light. Never, therefore, did he take any deliberate step towards fame, never did he reach out his hand to fame, near to him as fame had been more than once in his life. Indeed, he deliberately repelled the oncoming footsteps by the publication of his scathing *La foire sur la place,* through which he permanently forfeited the favor of the Parisian press. What he writes

of Jean Christophe applies perfectly to himself: "Le succès n'était pas son but; son but était la foi." [Not success, but faith was his goal.]

Fame loved Rolland, who loved fame from afar, unobtrusively. "It were pity," fame seemed to say, "to disturb this man's work. The seeds must lie for a while in the darkness, enduring patiently, until the time comes for germination." Reputation and the work were growing in two different worlds, awaiting contact. A small community of admirers had formed after the publication of *Beethoven*. They followed Jean Christophe in his pilgrimage. The faithful of the "*Cahiers de la quinzaine*" won new friends. Without any help from the press, through the unseen influence of responsive sympathies, the circulation of his works grew. Translations were published. Paul Seippel, the distinguished Swiss author, penned a comprehensive biography. newspapers had begun to print his name. The crown-Rolland had found many devoted admirers before the ing of his completed work by the Academy was nothing more than the sound of a trumpet summoning the armies of his admirers to a review. All at once accounts of Rolland broke upon the world like a flood, shortly before he had attained his fiftieth year. In 1912 he was still unknown; in 1914 he had a wide reputation. With a cry of astonishment, a generation recognized its leader, and Europe became aware of the first product of the new universal European spirit.

There is a mystical significance in Romain Rolland's rise to fame, just as in every event of his life. Fame

came late to this man whom fame had passed by during the bitter years of mental distress and material need. Nevertheless it came at the right hour, since it came before the war. Rolland's renown put a sword into his hand. At the decisive moment he had power and a voice to speak for Europe. He stood on a pedestal, so that he was visible above the medley. In truth fame was granted at a fitting time, when through suffering and knowledge Rolland had grown ripe for his highest function, to assume his European responsibility. Reputation, and the power that reputation gives, came at a moment when the world of the courageous needed a man who should proclaim against the world itself the world's eternal message of brotherhood.

CHAPTER XIII

ROLLAND AS THE EMBODIMENT OF THE EUROPEAN SPIRIT

THUS does Rolland's life pass from obscurity into the light of day. Progress is slow, but the impulsion comes from powerful energies. The movement towards the goal is not always obvious, and yet his life is associated as is none other with the disastrously impending destiny of Europe. Regarded from the outlook of fulfillment, we discern that all the ostensibly counteracting influences, the years of inconspicuous and apparently vain struggle, have been necessary; we see that every incident has been symbolic. The career develops like a work of art, building itself up in a wise ordination of will and chance. We should take too mean a view of destiny, were we to think it the outcome of pure sport that this man hitherto unknown should become a moral force in the world during the very years when, as never before, there was need for one who would champion the things of the spirit.

The year 1914 marks the close of Romain Rolland's private life. Henceforth his career belongs to the world; his biography becomes part of history; his personal experiences can no longer be detached from his public activities. The solitary has been forced out of

his workroom to accomplish his task in the world. The man whose existence has been so retired, must now live with doors and windows open. His every essay, his every letter, is a manifesto. His life from now onward shapes itself like a heroic drama. From the hour when his most cherished ideal, the unity of Europe, seemed bent on its own destruction, he emerged from his retirement to become a vital element of his time, an impersonal force, a chapter in the history of the European spirit. Just as little as Tolstoi's life can be detached from his propagandist activities, just so little is there justification in this case for an attempt to distinguish between the man and his influence. Since 1914, Romain Rolland has been one with his ideal and one with the struggle for its realization. No longer is he author, poet, or artist; no longer does he belong to himself. He is the voice of Europe in the season of its most poignant agony. He has become the conscience of the world.

PART TWO

EARLY WORK AS A DRAMATIST

> Son but n'était pas le succès; son but était la foi.
>
> JEAN CHRISTOPHE, "*La Révolte.*"

CHAPTER I

THE WORK AND THE EPOCH

ROMAIN ROLLAND'S work cannot be understood without an understanding of the epoch in which that work came into being. For here we have a passion that springs from the weariness of an entire country, a faith that springs from the disillusionment of a humiliated nation. The shadow of 1870 was cast across the youth of the French author. The significance and greatness of his work taken as a whole depend upon the way in which it constitutes a spiritual bridge between one great war and the next. It arises from a blood-stained earth and a storm-tossed horizon on one side, reaching across on the other to the new struggle and the new spirit.

It originates in gloom. A land defeated in war is like a man who has lost his god. Divine ecstasy is suddenly replaced by dull exhaustion; a fire that blazed in millions is extinguished, so that nothing but ash and cinder remain. There is a sudden collapse of all values. Enthusiasm has become meaningless; death is purposeless; the deeds, which but yesterday were deemed heroic, are now looked upon as follies; faith is a fraud; belief in oneself, a pitiful illusion. The impulse to fellowship fades; every one fights for his own hand, evades respon-

sibility that he may throw it upon his neighbor, thinks only of profit, utility, and personal advantage. Lofty aspirations are killed by an infinite weariness. Nothing is so utterly destructive to the moral energy of the masses as a defeat; nothing else degrades and weakens to the same extent the whole spiritual poise of a nation.

Such was the condition of France after 1870; the country was mentally tired; it had become a land without a leader. The best among its imaginative writers could give no help. They staggered for a while, as if stunned by the bludgeoning of the disaster. Then, as the first effects passed off, they reëntered their old paths which led them into a purely literary field, remote and ever remoter from the destinies of their nation. It is not within the power of men already mature to make headway against a national catastrophe. Zola, Flaubert, Anatole France, and Maupassant, needed all their strength to keep themselves erect on their own feet. They could give no support to their nation. Their experiences had made them skeptical; they no longer possessed sufficient faith to give a new faith to the French people. But the younger writers, those who had no personal memories of the disaster, those who had not witnessed the actual struggle and had merely grown up amid the spiritual corpses left upon the battlefield, those who looked upon the ravaged and tormented soul of France, could not succumb to the influences of this weariness. The young cannot live without faith, cannot breathe in the moral stagnation of a materialistic world. For them, life and creation mean the lighting up of

faith, that mystically burning faith which glows unquenchably in every new generation, glows even among the tombs of the generation which has passed away. To the newcomers, the defeat is no more than one of the primary factors of their experience, the most urgent of the problems their art must take into account. They feel that they are naught unless they prove able to restore this France, torn and bleeding after the struggle. It is their mission to provide a new faith for this skeptically resigned people. Such is the task for their robust energies, such the goal of their aspiration. Not by chance do we find that among the best in defeated nations a new idealism invariably springs to life; that the poets of such peoples have but one aim, to bring solace to their nation that the sense of defeat may be assuaged.

How can a vanquished nation be solaced? How can the sting of defeat be soothed? The writer must be competent to divert his readers' thoughts from the present; he must fashion a dialectic of defeat which shall replace despair by hope. These young authors endeavored to bring help in two different ways. Some pointed towards the future, saying: "Cherish hatred; last time we were beaten, next time we shall conquer." This was the argument of the nationalists, and there is significance in the fact that it was predominantly voiced by the sometime companions of Rolland, by Maurice Barrès, Paul Claudel, and Péguy. For thirty years, with the hammers of verse and prose, they fashioned the wounded pride of the French nation that it might become

a weapon to strike the hated foe to the heart. For thirty years they talked of nothing but yesterday's defeat and to-morrow's triumph. Ever afresh did they tear open the old wound. Again and again, when the young were inclining towards reconciliation, did these writers inflame their minds anew with exhortations in the heroic vein. From hand to hand they passed the unquenchable torch of revenge, ready and eager to fling it into Europe's powder barrel.

The other type of idealism, that of Rolland, less clamant and long ignored, looked in a very different direction for solace, turning its gaze not towards the immediate future but towards eternity. It did not promise a new victory, but showed that false values had been used in estimating defeat. For writers of this school, for the pupils of Tolstoi, force is no argument for the spirit, the externals of success provide no criterion of value for the soul. In their view, the individual does not conquer when the generals of his nation march to victory through a hundred provinces; the individual is not vanquished when the army loses a thousand pieces of artillery. The individual gains the victory, only when he is free from illusion, and when he has no part in any wrong committed by his nation. In their isolation, those who hold such views have continually endeavored to induce France, not indeed to forget her defeat, but to make of that defeat a source of moral greatness, to recognize the worth of the spiritual seed which has germinated on the blood-drenched battlefields. Of such a character, in *Jean Christophe*, are the words of

Olivier, the spokesman of all young Frenchmen of this way of thinking. Speaking to his German friend, he says: "Fortunate the defeat, blessed the disaster! Not for us to disavow it, for we are its children. . . . It is you, my dear Christopher, who have refashioned us. . . . The defeat, little as you may have wished it, has done us more good than evil. You have rekindled the torch of our idealism, have given a fresh impetus to our science, and have reanimated our faith. . . . We owe to you the reawakening of our racial conscience. . . . Picture the young Frenchmen who were born in houses of mourning under the shadow of defeat; who were nourished on gloomy thoughts; who were trained to be the instruments of a bloody, inevitable, and perhaps useless revenge. Such was the lesson impressed upon their minds from their earliest years: they were taught that there is no justice in this world; that might crushes right. A revelation of this character will either degrade a child's soul for ever, or will permanently uplift it." And Rolland continues: "Defeat refashions the elite of a nation, segregating the single-minded and the strong, and making them more single-minded and stronger than before; but the others are hastened by defeat down the path leading to destruction. Thus are the masses of the people . . . separated from the elite, leaving these free to continue their forward march."

For Rolland this elite, reconciling France with the world, will in days to come fulfil the mission of his nation. In ultimate analysis, his thirty years' work may be regarded as one continuous attempt to prevent a new

war—to hinder the revival of the horrible cleavage between victory and defeat. His aim has been, not to teach a new national pride, but to inculcate a new heroism of self-conquest, a new faith in justice.

Thus from the same source, from the darkness of defeat, there have flowed two different streams of idealism. In speech and writing, an invisible struggle has been waged for the soul of the new generation. The facts of history turned the scale in favor of Maurice Barrès. The year 1914 marked the defeat of the ideas of Romain Rolland. Thus defeat was not merely an experience imposed on him in youth, for defeat has likewise been the tragic substance of his years of mature manhood. But it has always been his peculiar talent to create out of defeat the strongest of his works, to draw from resignation new ardors, to derive from disillusionment a passionate faith. He has ever been the poet of the vanquished, the consoler of the despairing, the dauntless guide towards that world where suffering is transmuted into positive values and where misfortune becomes a source of strength. That which was born out of a tragical time, the experience of a nation under the heel of destiny, Rolland has made available for all times and all nations.

CHAPTER II

THE WILL TO GREATNESS

ROLLAND realized his mission early in his career. The hero of one of his first writings, the Girondist Hugot in *Le triomphe de la raison*, discloses the author's own ardent faith when he declares: "Our first duty is to be great, and to defend greatness on earth."

This will to greatness lies hidden at the heart of all personal greatness. What distinguishes Romain Rolland from others, what distinguishes the beginner of those days and the fighter of the thirty years that have since elapsed, is that in art he never creates anything isolated, anything with a purely literary or casual scope. Invariably his efforts are directed towards the loftiest moral aims; he aspires towards eternal forms; strives to fashion the monumental. His goal is to produce a fresco, to paint a comprehensive picture, to achieve an epic completeness. He does not choose his literary colleagues as models, but takes as examples the heroes of the ages. He tears his gaze away from Paris, from the movement of contemporary life, which he regards as trivial. Tolstoi, the only modern who seems to him poietic, as the great men of an earlier day were poietic,

is his teacher and master. Despite his humility, he cannot but feel that his own creative impulse makes him more closely akin to Shakespeare's historical plays, to Tolstoi's *War and Peace,* to Goethe's universality, to Balzac's wealth of imagination, to Wagner's promethean art, than he is akin to the activities of his contemporaries, whose energies are concentrated upon material success. He studies his exemplars' lives, to draw courage from their courage; he examines their works, in order that, using their measure, he may lift his own achievements above the commonplace and the relative. His zeal for the absolute is almost a religion. Without venturing to compare himself with them, he thinks always of the incomparably great, of the meteors that have fallen out of eternity into our own day. He dreams of creating a Sistine of symphonies, dramas like Shakespeare's histories, an epic like *War and Peace;* not of writing a new *Madame Bovary* or tales like those of Maupassant. The timeless is his true world; it is the star towards which his creative will modestly and yet passionately aspires. Among latter-day Frenchmen none but Victor Hugo and Balzac have had this glorious fervor for the monumental; among the Germans none has had it since Richard Wagner; among contemporary Englishmen, none perhaps but Thomas Hardy.

Neither talent nor diligence suffices unaided to inspire such an urge towards the transcendent. A moral force must be the lever to shake a spiritual world to its foundations. The moral force which Rolland possesses is a courage unexampled in the history of modern litera-

ture. The quality that first made his attitude on the war manifest to the world, the heroism which led him to take his stand alone against the sentiments of an entire epoch, had, to the discerning, already been made apparent in the writings of the inconspicuous beginner a quarter of a century earlier. A man of an easy-going and conciliatory nature is not suddenly transformed into a hero. Courage, like every other power of the soul, must be steeled and tempered by many trials. Among all those of his generation, Rolland had long been signalized as the boldest by his preoccupation with mighty designs. Not merely did he dream, like ambitious schoolboys, of Iliads and pentalogies; he actually created them in the fevered world of to-day, working in isolation, with the dauntless spirit of past centuries. Not one of his plays had been staged, not a publisher had accepted any of his books, when he began a dramatic cycle as comprehensive as Shakespeare's histories. He had as yet no public, no name, when he began his colossal romance, *Jean Christophe*. He embroiled himself with the theaters, when in his manifesto *Le théatre du peuple* he censured the triteness and commercialism of the contemporary drama. He likewise embroiled himself with the critics, when, in *La foire sur la place*, he pilloried the cheapjackery of Parisian journalism and French dilettantism with a severity which had been unknown westward of the Rhine since the publication of Balzac's *Les illusions perdues*. This young man whose financial position was precarious, who had no powerful associates, who had found no favor with newspaper edi-

tors, publishers, or theatrical managers, proposed to remold the spirit of his generation, simply by his own will and the power of his own deeds. Instead of aiming at a neighboring goal, he always worked for a distant future, worked with that religious faith in greatness which was displayed by the medieval architects—men who planned cathedrals for the honor of God, recking little whether they themselves would survive to see the completion of their designs. This courage, which draws its strength from the religious elements of his nature, is his sole helper. The watchword of his life may be said to have been the phrase of William the Silent, prefixed by Rolland as motto to *Aërt:* "I have no need of approval to give me hope; nor of success, to brace me to perseverance."

CHAPTER III

THE CREATIVE CYCLES

THE will to greatness involuntarily finds expression in characteristic forms. Rarely does Rolland attempt to deal with any isolated topic, and he never concerns himself about a mere episode in feeling or in history. His creative imagination is attracted solely by elemental phenomena, by the great "courants de foi," whereby with mystical energy a single idea is suddenly carried into the minds of millions of individuals; whereby a country, an epoch, a generation, will become kindled like a firebrand, and will shed light over the environing darkness. He lights his own poetic flame at the great beacons of mankind, be they individuals of genius or inspired epochs, Beethoven or the Renaissance, Tolstoi or the Revolution, Michelangelo or the Crusades. Yet for the artistic control of such phenomena, widely ranging, deeply rooted in the cosmos, overshadowing entire eras, more is requisite than the raw ambition and fitful enthusiasm of an adolescent. If a mental state of this nature is to fashion anything that shall endure, it must do so in boldly conceived forms. The cultural history of inspired and heroic periods, cannot be limned in fugitive sketches; careful grounding is indispensable.

Above all does this apply to monumental architecture. Here we must have a spacious site for the display of the structures, and terraces from which a general view can be secured.

That is why, in all his works, Rolland needs so much room. He desires to be just to every epoch as to every individual. He never wishes to display a chance section, but would fain exhibit the entire cycle of happenings. He would fain depict, not episodes of the French revolution, but the Revolution as a whole; not the history of Jean Christophe Krafft, the individual modern musician, but the history of contemporary Europe. He aims at presenting, not only the central force of an era, but likewise the manifold counterforces; not the action alone, but the reaction as well. For Rolland, breadth of scope is a moral necessity rather than an artistic. Since he would be just in his enthusiasm, since in the parliament of his work he would give every idea its spokesman, he is compelled to write many-voiced choruses. That he may exhibit the Revolution in all its aspects, its rise, its troubles, its political activities, its decline, and its fall, he plans a cycle of ten dramas. The Renaissance needs a treatment hardly less extensive. *Jean Christophe* must have three thousand pages. To Rolland, the intermediate form, the variety, seems no less important than the generic type. He is aware of the danger of dealing exclusively with types. What would *Jean Christophe* be worth to us, if with the figure of the hero there were merely contrasted that of Olivier as a typical Frenchman; if we did not find subsidiary figures,

good and evil, grouped in numberless variations around the symbolic dominants. If we are to secure a genuinely objective view, many witnesses must be summoned; if we are to form a just judgment, the whole wealth of facts must be taken into consideration. It is this ethical demand for justice to the small no less than to the great which makes spacious forms essential to Rolland. This is why his creative artistry demands an all-embracing outlook, a cyclic method of presentation. Each individual work in these cycles, however circumscribed it may appear at the first glance, is no more than a segment, whose full significance becomes apparent only when we grasp its relationship to the focal thought, to justice as the moral center of gravity, as a point whence all ideas, words, and actions appear equidistant from the center of universal humanity. The circle, the cycle, which unrestingly environs all its wealth of content, wherein discords are harmoniously resolved—to Rolland, ever the musician, this symbol of sensory justice is the favorite and wellnigh exclusive form.

The work of Romain Rolland during the last thirty years comprises five such creative cycles. Too extended in their scope, they have not all been completed. The first, a dramatic cycle, which in the spirit of Shakespeare was to represent the Renaissance as an integral unit much as Gobineau desired to represent it, remained a fragment. Even the individual dramas have been cast aside by Rolland as inadequate. The *Tragédies de la foi* form the second cycle; the *Théatre de la révolution*

forms the third. Both are unfinished, but the fragments are of imperishable value. The fourth cycle, the *Vie des hommes illustres*, a cycle of biographies planned to form as it were a frieze round the temple of the invisible God, is likewise incomplete. The ten volumes of *Jean Christophe* alone succeed in rounding off the full circle of a generation, uniting grandeur and justice in the foreshadowed concord.

Above these five creative cycles there looms another and later cycle, recognizable as yet only in its beginning and its end, its origination and its recurrence. It will express the harmonious connection of a manifold existence with a lofty and universal life-cycle in Goethe's sense, a cycle wherein life and poesy, word and writing, character and action, themselves become works of art. But this cycle still glows in the process of fashioning. We feel its vital heat radiating into our mortal world.

CHAPTER IV

THE UNKNOWN DRAMATIC CYCLE. 1890–1895

THE young man of twenty-two, just liberated from the walls of the Parisian seminary, fired with the genius of music and with that of Shakespeare's enthralling plays, had in Italy his first experience of the world as a sphere of freedom. He had learned history from documents and syllabuses. Now history looked at him with living eyes out of statues and figures; the Italian cities, the centuries, seemed to move as if on a stage under his impassioned gaze. Give them but speech, these sublime memories, and history would become poesy, the past would grow into a peopled tragedy. During his first hours in the south he was in a sublime intoxication. Not as historian but as poet did he first see Rome and Florence.

"Here," he said to himself in youthful fervor, "here is the greatness for which I have yearned. Here, at least, it used to be, in the days of the Renaissance, when these cathedrals grew heavenward amid the storms of battle, and when Michelangelo and Raphael were adorning the walls of the Vatican, what time the popes were no less mighty in spirit than the masters of art—for in that epoch, after centuries of interment with the antique

statues, the heroic spirit of ancient Greece had been revived in a new Europe." His imagination conjured up the superhuman figures of that earlier day; and of a sudden, Shakespeare, the friend of his first youth, filled his mind once more. Simultaneously, as I have already recounted, witnessing a number of performances by Ernesto Rossi, he came to realize his own dramatic talent. Not now, as of old, in the Clamecy loft, was he chiefly allured by the gentle feminine figures. The strongest appeal, to his early manhood, was exercised by the fierceness of the more powerful characters, by the penetrating truth of a knowledge of mankind, by the stormy tumult of the soul. In France, Shakespeare is hardly known at all by stage presentation, and but very little in prose translation. Rolland, however, now attained as intimate an acquaintanceship with Shakespeare as had been possessed a hundred years earlier, almost at the same age, by Goethe when he conceived his *Oration on Shakespeare*. This new inspiration showed itself in a vigorous creative impulse. Rolland penned a series of dramas dealing with the great figures of the past, working with the fervor of the beginner, and with that sense of newly acquired mastery which was felt by the Germans of the Sturm und Drang era.

These plays remained unpublished, at first owing to the disfavor of circumstances, but subsequently because the author's ripening critical faculty made him withhold them from the world. The first, entitled *Orsino*, was written at Rome in 1890. Next, in the halcyon clime of Sicily, he composed *Empedocles*, uninfluenced

by Hölderlin's ambitious draft, of which Rolland heard first from Malwida von Meysenbug. In the same year, 1891, he wrote *Gli Baglioni.* His return to Paris did not interrupt this outpouring, for in 1892 he wrote two plays, *Caligula,* and *Niobé.* From his wedding journey to the beloved Italy in 1893 he returned with a new Renaissance drama, *Le siège de Mantoue.* This is the only one of the early plays which the author acknowledges to-day, though by an unfortunate mischance the manuscript has been lost. At length turning his attention to French history, he wrote *Saint Louis* (1893), the first of his *Tragédies de la foi.* Next came *Jeanne de Piennes* (1894), which remains unpublished. . . . *Aërt* (1895), the second of the *Tragédies de la foi,* was the first of Rolland's plays to be staged. There now (1896–1902) followed the four dramas of the *Théatre de la révolution.* In 1900 he wrote *La Montespan* and *Les trois amoureuses.*

Thus before the era of the more important works there were composed no less than twelve dramas, equaling in bulk the entire dramatic output of Schiller, Kleist, or Hebbel. The first eight of these were never either printed or staged. Except for the appreciation by his confidant Malwida von Meysenbug in *Der Lebens Abend einer Idealistin* (a connoisseur's tribute to their artistic merits), not a word has ever been said about them.

With a single exception. One of the plays was read on a classical occasion by one of the greatest French actors of the day, but the reminiscence is a painful one.

Gabriel Monod, who from being Rolland's teacher had become his friend, noting Malwida von Meysenbug's enthusiasm, gave three of Rolland's pieces to Mounet-Sully, who was delighted with them. The actor submitted them to the Comédie Française, and in the reading committee he fought desperately on behalf of the unknown, whose dramatic talent was more obvious to him, the comedian, than it was to the men of letters. *Orsino* and *Gli Baglioni* were ruthlessly rejected, but *Niobé* was read to the committee. This was a momentous incident in Rolland's life; for the first time, fame seemed close at hand. Mounet-Sully read the play. Rolland was present. The reading took two hours, and for a further two minutes the young author's fate hung in the balance. Not yet, however, was celebrity to come. The drama was refused, to relapse into oblivion. It was not even accorded the lesser grace of print; and of the dozen or so dramatic works which the dauntless author penned during the next decade, not one found its way on to the boards of the national theater.

We know no more than the names of these early works, and are unable to judge their worth. But when we study the later plays we may deduce the conclusion that in the earlier ones a premature flame, raging too hotly, burned itself out. If the dramas which first appeared in the press charm us by their maturity and concentration, they depend for these qualities upon the fate which left their predecessors unknown. Their calm is built upon the passion of those which were sacrificed unborn; they owe their orderly structure to the heroic

zeal of their martyred brethren. All true creation grows out of the dark humus of rejected creations. Of none is it more true than of Romain Rolland that his work blossoms upon the soil of renunciation.

CHAPTER V

THE TRAGEDIES OF FAITH

Saint Louis. Aërt. 1895–1898

TWENTY years after their first composition, republishing the forgotten dramas of his youth under the title *Les tragédies de la foi* (1913), Rolland alluded in the preface to the tragical melancholy of the epoch in which they were composed. "At that time," he writes, "we were much further from our goal, and far more isolated." The elder brothers of Jean Christophe and Olivier, "less robust though not less fervent in the faith," had found it harder to defend their beliefs, to maintain their idealism at its lofty level, than did the youth of the new day, living in a stronger France, a freer Europe. Twenty years earlier, the shadow of defeat still lay athwart the land. These heroes of the French spirit had been compelled, even within themselves, to fight the evil genius of the race, to combat doubts as to the high destinies of their nation, to struggle against the lassitude of the vanquished. Then was to be heard the cry of a petty era lamenting its vanished greatness; it aroused no echo from the stage or from the people; it wasted itself in the unresponsive

skies—and yet it was the expression of an undying faith in life.

Closely akin to this ardor is the faith voiced by Rolland's dramatic cycle, though the plays deal with such different epochs, and are so diverse in the range of their ideas. He wishes to depict the "courants de foi," the mysterious streams of faith, at a time when a flame of spiritual enthusiasm is spreading through an entire nation, when an idea is flashing from mind to mind, involving unnumbered thousands in the storm of an illusion; when the calm of the soul is suddenly ruffled by heroic tumult; when the word, the faith, the ideal, though ever invisible and unattainable, transfuses the inert world and lifts it towards the stars. It matters nothing in ultimate analysis what idea fires the souls of men, whether the idea be that of Saint Louis for the holy sepulcher and Christ's realm, or that of Aërt for the fatherland, or that of the Girondists for freedom. The ostensible goal is a minor matter; the essence of such movements is the wonder-working faith; it is this which assembles a people for crusades into the east, which summons thousands to death for the nation, which makes leaders throw themselves willingly under the guillotine. "Toute la vie est dans l'essor," the reality of life is found in its impetus, as Verhaeren says; that alone is beautiful which is created in the enthusiasm of faith. We are not to infer that these early heroes, born out of due time, must have succumbed to discouragement since they failed to reach their goal; one and all they had to bow their souls to the influences of a petty time. That

is why Saint Louis died without seeing Jerusalem; why Aërt, fleeing from bondage, found only the eternal freedom of death; why the Girondists were trampled beneath the heels of the mob. These men had the true faith, that faith which does not demand realization in this world. In widely separated centuries, and against different storms of time, they were the banner bearers of the same ideal, whether they carried the cross or held the sword, whether they wore the cap of liberty or the visored helm. They were animated with the same enthusiasm for the unseen; they had the same enemy, call it cowardice, call it poverty of spirit, call it the supineness of a weary age. When destiny refused them the externals of greatness, they created greatness in their own souls. Amid unheroic environments they displayed the perennial heroism of the undaunted will; the triumph of the spirit which, when animated with faith, can prove victorious over time.

The significance, the lofty aim, of these early plays, was their intention to recall to the minds of contemporaries the memory of forgotten brothers in the faith, to arouse for the service of the spirit and not for the ends of brute force that idealism which ever burgeons from the imperishable seed of youth. Already we discern the entire moral purport of Rolland's later work, the endeavor to change the world by the force of inspiration. "Tout est bien qui exalte la vie." Everything which exalts life is good. This is Rolland's confession of faith, as it is that of his own Olivier. Ardor alone can create vital realities. There is no defeat over which

the will cannot triumph; there is no sorrow above which a free spirit cannot soar. Who wills the unattainable, is stronger than destiny; even his destruction in this mortal world is none the less a mastery of fate. The tragedy of his heroism kindles fresh enthusiasm, which seizes the standard as it slips from his grasp, to raise it anew and bear it onward through the ages.

CHAPTER VI

SAINT LOUIS

1894

THIS epic of King Louis IX is a drama of religious exaltation, born of the spirit of music, an adaptation of the Wagnerian idea of elucidating ancestral sagas in works of art. It was originally designed as an opera. Rolland actually composed an overture to the work; but this, like his other musical compositions, remains unpublished. Subsequently he was satisfied with lyrical treatment in place of music. We find no touch of Shakespearean passion in these gentle pictures. It is a heroic legend of the saints, in dramatic form. The scenes remind us of a phrase of Flaubert's in *La légende de Saint Julien l'Hospitalier,* in that they are "written as they appear in the stained-glass windows of our churches." The tints are delicate, like those of the frescoes in the Panthéon, where Puvis de Chavannes depicts another French saint, Sainte Geneviève watching over Paris. The soft moonlight playing on the saint's figure in the frescoes is identical with the light which in Rolland's drama shines like a halo of goodness round the head of the pious king of France.

The music of *Parsifal* seems to sound faintly through the work. We trace the lineaments of Parsifal himself in this monarch, to whom knowledge comes not through sympathy but through goodness, and who finds the aptest phrase to explain his own title to fame, saying: "Pour comprendre les autres, il ne faut qu'aimer"—To understand others, we need only love. His leading quality is gentleness, but he has so much of it that the strong grow weak before him; he has nothing but his faith, but this faith builds mountains of action. He neither can nor will lead his people to victory; but he makes his subjects transcend themselves, transcend their own inertia and the apparently futile venture of the crusade, to attain faith. Thereby he gives the whole nation the greatness which ever springs from self-sacrifice. In Saint Louis, Rolland for the first time presents his favorite type, that of the vanquished victor. The king never reaches his goal, but "plus qu'il est écrasé par les choses plus il semble les dominer davantage"—the more he seems to be crushed by things, the more does he dominate them. When, like Moses, he is forbidden to set eyes on the promised land, when it proves to be his destiny "de mourir vaincu," to die conquered, as he draws his last breath on the mountain slope his soldiers at the summit, catching sight of the city which is the goal of their aspirations, raise an exultant shout. Louis knows that to one who strives for the unattainable the world can never give victory, but "il est beau lutter pour l'impossible quand l'impossible est Dieu"—it is glorious to fight for the unattainable when the unattainable is God. For the van-

quished in such a struggle, the highest triumph is reserved. He has stirred up the weak in soul to do a deed whose rapture is denied to himself; from his own faith he has created faith in others; from his own spirit has issued the eternal spirit.

Rolland's first published work exhales the atmosphere of Christianity. Humility conquers force, faith conquers the world, love conquers hatred; these eternal truths which have been incorporated in countless sayings and writings from those of the primitive Christians down to those of Tolstoi, are repeated once again by Rolland in the form of a legend of the saints. In his later works, however, with a freer touch, he shows that the power of faith is not tied to any particular creed. The symbolical world, which is here used as a romanticist vehicle in which to enwrap his own idealism, is replaced by the environment of modern days. Thus we are taught that from Saint Louis and the crusades it is but a step to our own soul, if it desire "to be great and to defend greatness on earth."

CHAPTER VII

AËRT

1898

AËRT was written a year later than *Saint Louis;* more explicitly than the pious epic does it aim at restoring faith and idealism to the disheartened nation. *Saint Louis* is a heroic legend, a tender reminiscence of former greatness; *Aërt* is the tragedy of the vanquished, and a passionate appeal to them to awaken. The stage directions express this aim clearly: "The scene is cast in an imaginary Holland of the seventeenth century. We see a people broken by defeat and, which is much worse, debased thereby. The future presents itself as a period of slow decadence, whose anticipation definitively annuls the already exhausted energies. . . . The moral and political humiliations of recent years are the foundation of the troubles still in store."

Such is the environment in which Rolland places Aërt, the young prince, heir to vanished greatness. This Holland is, of course, symbolical of the Third Republic. Fruitless attempts are made, by the temptations of loose living, by various artifices, by the instilling of doubt, to break the captive's faith in greatness, to undermine the

one power that still sustains the debile body and the suffering soul. The hypocrites of his entourage do their utmost, with luxury, frivolity, and lies, to wean him from what he considers his high calling, which is to prove himself worthy heir of a glorious past. He remains unshaken. His tutor, Maître Trojanus (a forerunner of Anatole France), all of whose qualities, kindliness, skepticism, energy, and wisdom, are but lukewarm, would like to make a Marcus Aurelius of his ardent pupil, one who thinks and renounces rather than one who acts. The lad proudly answers: "I pay due reverence to ideas, but I recognize something higher than they, moral grandeur." In a laodicean age, he yearns for action.

But action is force, struggle is blood. His gentle spirit desires peace; his moral will craves for the right. The youth has within him both a Hamlet and a Saint-Just, both a vacillator and a zealot. He is a wraithlike double of Olivier, already able to reckon up all values. The goal of Aërt's youthful passion is still indeterminate; this passion is nothing but a flame which wastes itself in words and aspirations. He does not make the deed come at his beckoning; but the deed takes possession of him, dragging the weakling down with it into the depths whence there is no other issue than by death. From degradation he finds a last rescue, a path to moral greatness, his own deed, done for the sake of all. Surrounded by the scornful victors, calling to him "Too late," he answers proudly, "Not too late to be free," and plunges headlong out of life.

This romanticist play is a piece of tragical symbolism.

It reminds us a little of another youthful composition, the work of a poet who has now attained fame. I refer to Fritz von Unruh's *Die Offiziere*, in which the torment of enforced inactivity and repressed heroic will gives rise to warlike impulses as a means of spiritual enfranchisement. Like Unruh's hero, Aërt in his outcry proclaims the torpor of his companions, voices his oppression amid the sultry and stagnant atmosphere of a time devoid of faith. Encompassed by a gray materialism, during the years when Zola and Mirbeau were at the zenith of their fame, the lonely Rolland was hoisting the flag of the ideal over a humiliated land.

CHAPTER VIII

ATTEMPT TO REGENERATE THE FRENCH STAGE

WITH whole-souled faith the young poet uttered his first dramatic appeals in the heroic form, being mindful of Schiller's saying that fortunate epochs could devote themselves to the service of beauty, whereas in times of weakness it was necessary to lean upon the examples of past heroism. Rolland had issued to his nation a summons to greatness. There was no answer. His conviction that a new impetus was indispensable remaining unshaken, Rolland looked for the cause of this lack of response. He rightly discerned it, not in his own work, but in the refractoriness of the age. Tolstoi, in his books and in the wonderful letter to Rolland, had been the first to make the young man realize the sterility of bourgeois art. Above all in the drama, its most sensual form of expression, that art had lost touch with the moral and emotional forces of life. A clique of busy playwrights had monopolized the Parisian stage. Their eternal theme was adultery, in its manifold variations. They depicted petty erotic conflicts, but never dealt with a universally human ethical problem. The audiences, badly counseled by the press, which deliberately fostered the public's intellectual

lethargy, did not ask to be morally awakened, but merely to be amused and pleased. The theater was anything in the world other than "the moral institution" demanded by Schiller and championed by d'Alembert. No breath of passion found its way from such dramatic art as this into the heart of the nation; there was nothing but spindrift scattered over the surface by the breeze. A great gulf was fixed between this witty and sensuous amusement, and the genuinely creative and receptive energies of France.

Rolland, led by Tolstoi and accompanied by enthusiastic friends, realized the moral dangers of the situation. He perceived that dramatic art is worthless and destructive when it lives a life remote from the people. Unconsciously in *Aërt* he had heralded what he now formulated as a definite principle, that the people will be the first to understand genuinely heroic problems. The simple craftsman Claes in that play is the only member of the captive prince's circle who revolts against tepid submission, who burns at the disgrace inflicted on his fatherland. In other artistic forms than the drama, the titanic forces surging up from the depths of the people had already been recognized. Zola and the naturalists had depicted the tragical beauty of the proletariat; Millet and Meunier had given pictorial and sculptural representations of proletarians; socialism had unleashed the religious might of the collective consciousness. The theater alone, vehicle for the most direct working of art upon the common people, had been captured by the bourgeoisie, its tremendous possibilities for promoting a

moral renascence being thereby cut off. Unceasingly did the drama practice the in-and-in breeding of sexual problems. In its pursuit of erotic trifles, it had overlooked the new social ideas, the most fundamental of modern times. It was in danger of decay because it no longer thrust its roots into the permanent subsoil of the nation. The anæmia of dramatic art, as Rolland recognized, could be cured only by intimate association with the life of the people. The effeminateness of the French drama must be replaced by virility through vital contact with the masses. "Seul la sève populaire peut lui rendre la vie et la santé." If the theater aspires to be national, it must not merely minister to the luxury of the upper ten thousand. It must become the moral nutriment of the common people, and must draw fertility from the folk-soul.

Rolland's work during the next few years was an endeavor to provide such a theater for the people. A few young men without influence or authority, strong only in the ardor and sincerity of their youthfulness, tried to bring this lofty idea to fruition, despite the utter indifference of the metropolis, and in defiance of the veiled hostility of the press. In their "*Revue dramatique*" they published manifestoes. They sought for actors, stages, and helpers. They wrote plays, formed committees, sent dispatches to ministers of state. In their endeavor to bridge the chasm between the bourgeois theater and the nation, they wrought with the fanatical zeal of the leaders of forlorn hopes. Rolland was their chief. His manifesto, *Le théatre du peuple*, and his *Théatre de*

la révolution, are enduring monuments of an attempt which temporarily ended in defeat, but which, like all his defeats, has been transmuted, humanly and artistically, into a moral triumph.

CHAPTER IX

AN APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE

"THE old era is finished; the new era is beginning." Rolland, writing in the "Revue dramatique" in 1900, opened his appeal with these words by Schiller. The summons was two-fold, to the writers and to the people, that they should constitute a new unity, should form a people's theater. The stage and the plays were to belong to the people. Since the forces of the people are eternal and unalterable, art must accommodate itself to the people, not the people to art. This union must be perfected in the creative depths. It must not be a casual intimacy, but a permeation, a genetic wedding of souls. The people requires its own art, its own drama. As Tolstoi phrased it, the people must be the ultimate touchstone of all values. Its powerful, mystical, eternally religious energy of inspiration, must become more affirmative and stronger, so that art, which in its bourgeois associations has grown morbid and wan, can draw new vigor from the vigor of the people.

To this end it is essential that the people should no longer be a chance audience, transiently patronized by friendly managers and actors. The popular performances of the great theaters, such as have been customary

in Paris since the issue of Napoleon's decree on the subject, do not suffice. Valueless also, in Rolland's view, are the attempts made from time to time by the Comédie Française to present to the workers the plays of such court poets as Corneille and Racine. The people do not want caviare, but wholesome fare. For the nourishment of their indestructible idealism they need an art of their own, a theater of their own, and, above all, works adapted to their sensibilities and to their intellectual tastes. When they come to the theater, they must not be made to feel that they are tolerated guests in a world of unfamiliar ideas. In the art that is presented to them they must be able to recognize the mainspring of their own energies.

More appropriate, in Rolland's opinion, are the attempts which have been made by isolated individuals like Maurice Pottecher in Bussang (Vosges) to provide a "théatre du peuple," presenting to restricted audiences pieces easily understood. But such endeavors touch small circles only. The chasm in the gigantic metropolis between the stage and the real population remains unbridged. With the best will in the world, the twenty or thirty special representations are witnessed by no more than an infinitesimal proportion of the population. They do not signify a spiritual union, or promote a new moral impetus. Dramatic art has no permanent influence on the masses; and the masses, in their turn, have no influence on dramatic art. Though, in another literary sphere, Zola, Charles Louis Philippe, and Maupassant, began long ago to draw fertile inspiration from

proletarian idealism, the drama has remained sterile and antipopular.

The people, therefore, must have its own theater. When this has been achieved, what shall we offer to the popular audiences? Rolland makes a brief survey of world literature. The result is appalling. What can the workers care for the classical pieces of the French drama? Corneille and Racine, with their decorous emotion, are alien to him; the subtleties of Molière are barely comprehensible. The tragedies of classical antiquity, the writings of the Greek dramatists, would bore the workers; Hugo's romanticism would repel, despite the author's healthy instinct for reality. Shakespeare, the universally human, is more akin to the folk-mind, but his plays must be adapted to fit them for popular presentation, and thereby they are falsified. Schiller, with *Die Räuber* and *Wilhelm Tell*, might be expected to arouse enthusiasm; but Schiller, like Kleist with *Der Prinz von Homburg*, is, for nationalist reasons, somewhat uncongenial to the Parisians. Tolstoi's *The Dominion of Darkness* and Hauptmann's *Die Weber* would be comprehensible enough, but their matter would prove somewhat depressing. While well calculated to stir the consciences of the guilty, among the people they would arouse feelings of despair rather than of hope. Anzengruber, a genuine folk-poet, is too distinctively Viennese in his topics. Wagner, whose *Die Meistersinger* Rolland regards as the climax of universally comprehensible and elevating art, cannot be presented without the aid of music.

However far he looks back into the past, Rolland can find no answer to his question. But he is not easily discouraged. To him disappointment is but a spur to fresh effort. If there are as yet no plays for the people's theater, it is the sacred duty of the new generation to provide what is lacking. The manifesto ends with a jubilant appeal: "Tout est à dire! Tout est à faire! A l'oeuvre!" In the beginning was the deed.

CHAPTER X

THE PROGRAM

WHAT kind of plays do the people want? It wants "good" plays, in the sense in which the word "good" is used by Tolstoi when he speaks of "good books." It wants plays which are easy to understand without being commonplace; those which stimulate faith without leading the spirit astray; those which appeal, not to sensuality, not to the love of sight-seeing, but to the powerful idealistic instincts of the masses. These plays must not treat of minor conflicts; but, in the spirit of the antique tragedies, they must display man in the struggle with elemental forces, man as subject to heroic destiny. "Let us away with complicated psychologies, with subtle innuendoes, with obscure symbolisms, with the art of drawing-rooms and alcoves." Art for the people must be monumental. Though the people desires truth, it must not be delivered over to naturalism, for art which makes the masses aware of their own misery will never kindle the sacred flame of enthusiasm, but only the insensate passion of anger. If, next day, the workers are to resume their daily tasks with a heightened and more cheerful confidence, they need a tonic. Thus the evening must have been a source of

energy, but must at the same time have sharpened the intelligence. Undoubtedly the drama should display the people to the people, not however in the proletarian dullness of narrow dwellings, but on the pinnacles of the past. Rolland therefore opines, following to a large extent in Schiller's footsteps, that the people's theater must be historical in scope. The populace must not merely make its own acquaintance on the stage, but must be brought to admire its own past. Here we see the motif to which Rolland continually returns, the need for arousing a passionate aspiration towards greatness. In its suffering, the people must learn to regain delight in its own self.

With marvelous vividness does the imaginative historian display the epic significance of history. The forces of the past are sacred by reason of the spiritual energy which is part of every great movement. Reasoning persons can hardly fail to be revolted when they observe the unwarranted amount of space allotted to anecdotes, accessories, the trifles of history, at the expense of its living soul. The power of the past must be awakened; the will to action must be steeled. Those who live to-day must learn greatness from their fathers and forefathers. "History can teach people to get outside themselves, to read in the souls of others. We discern ourselves in the past, in a mingling of like characters and differing lineaments, with errors and vices which we can avoid. But precisely because history depicts the mutable, does it give us a better knowledge of the unchanging."

What, he goes on to ask, have French dramatists hitherto brought the people out of the past? The burlesque figure of Cyrano; the gracefully sentimental personality of the duke of Reichstadt; the artificial conception of Madame Sans-Gène! "Tout est à faire! Tout est à dire!" The land of dramatic art still lies fallow. "For France, national epopee is quite a new thing. Our playwrights have neglected the drama of the French people, although that people has been perhaps, since the days of Rome, the most heroic in the world. Europe's heart was beating in the kings, the thinkers, the revolutionists of France. And great as this nation has been in all domains of the spirit, its greatness has been shown above all in the field of action. Herein lay its most sublime creation; here was its poem, its drama, its epos. France did what others dreamed of doing. France wrote no Iliads, but lived a dozen. The heroes of France wrought more splendidly than the poets. No Shakespeare sang their deeds; but Danton on the scaffold was the spirit of Shakespeare personified. The life of France has touched the loftiest summits of joy; it has plumbed the deepest abysses of sorrow. It has been a wonderful 'comédie humaine,' a series of dramas; each of its epochs a new poem." This past must be recalled to life; French historical drama must restore it to the French people. "The spirit which soars above the centuries, will thus soar for centuries to come. If we would engender strong souls, we must nourish them with the energies of the world." Rolland now expands the French ode into a European ode. "The world must be our

theme, for a nation is too small." One hundred and twenty years earlier, Schiller had said: "I write as a citizen of the world. Early did I exchange my fatherland for mankind." Rolland is fired by Goethe's words: "National literature now means very little; the epoch of world literature is at hand." He utters the following appeal: "Let us make Goethe's prophesy a living reality! It is our task to teach the French to look upon their national history as a wellspring of popular art; but on no account should we exclude the sagas of other nations. Though it is doubtless our first duty to make the most of the treasures we have ourselves inherited, we must none the less find room on our stage for the great deeds of all races. Just as Anacharsis Cloots and Thomas Paine were chosen members of the Convention; just as Schiller, Klopstock, Washington, Priestley, Bentham, Pestalozzi, and Kosciuszko, are the heroes of our world; so should we inaugurate in Paris the epopee of the European people!"

Thus did Rolland's manifesto, passing far beyond the limits of the stage, become at its close his first appeal to Europe. Uttered by a solitary voice, it remained for the time unheeded and void of effect. Nevertheless the confession of faith had been spoken; it was indestructible; it could never pass away. Jean Christophe had proclaimed his message to the world.

CHAPTER XI

THE CREATIVE ARTIST

THE task is set. Who shall accomplish it? Romain Rolland answers by putting his hand to the work. The hero in him shrinks from no defeat; the youth in him dreads no difficulty. An epic of the French people is to be written. He does not hesitate to lay the foundations, though environed by the silence and indifference of the metropolis. As always, the impetus that drives him is moral rather than artistic. He has a sense of personal responsibility for an entire nation. By such productive, by such heroic idealism, alone, and not by a purely theoretical idealism, can idealism be engendered.

The theme is easy to find. Rolland turns to the greatest moment of French history, to the Revolution. He responds to the appeal of his revolutionary forefathers. On the 27th of Floréal, 1794, the Committee of Public Safety issued an invocation to authors "to glorify the chief happenings of the French revolution; to compose republican dramas; to hand down to posterity the great epochs of the French renascence; to inspire history with the firmness of character appropriate to the annals of a great nation defending its freedom against the onslaught

of all the tyrants of Europe." On the 11th of Messidor, the Committee asked young authors "boldly to recognize the whole magnitude of the undertaking, and to avoid the easy and well-trodden paths of mediocrity." The signatories of these decrees, Danton, Robespierre, Carnot, and Couthon, have now become national figures, legendary heroes, monuments in public places. Where restrictions were imposed on poetic inspiration by undue proximity to the subject, there is now room for the imagination to expand, seeing that this history of the period is remote enough to give free play to the tragic muse. The documents just quoted issue a summons to the poet and the historian in Rolland; but the same challenge rings from within as a personal heritage. Bonivard, one of his great-grandfathers on the paternal side, took part in the revolutionary struggle as "an apostle of liberty," and described in his diary the storming of the Bastille. More than half a century later, another relative was fatally stabbed in Clamecy during a rising against the coup d'état. The blood of revolutionary zealots runs in Rolland's veins, no less than the blood of religious devotees. A century after 1792, in the fervor of commemoration, he reconstructed the great figures of that glorious past. The theater in which the "French Iliads" were to be staged did not yet exist; no one had hitherto recognized Rolland as a literary force; actors and audience were alike lacking. Of all the requisites for the new creation, there existed solely his own faith and his own will. Building upon faith alone, he began to write *Le théatre de la révolution.*

CHAPTER XII

THE DRAMA OF THE REVOLUTION

1898–1902

PLANNING this "Iliad of the French People" for the people's theater, Rolland designed it as a decalogy, as a time sequence of ten dramas somewhat after the manner of Shakespeare's histories. "I wished," he writes in the 1909 preface to *Le théatre de la révolution,* "in the totality of this work to exhibit as it were the drama of a convulsion of nature, to depict a social storm from the moment when the first waves began to rise above the surface of the ocean down to the moment when calm spread once more over the face of the waters." No by-play, no anecdotal trifling, was to mitigate the mighty rhythm of the primitive forces. "My leading aim was to purify the course of events, as far as might be, from all romanticist intrigue, which would serve only to encumber and belittle the movement. Above all I desired to throw light upon the great political and social interests on behalf of which mankind has been fighting for a hundred years." It is obvious that the work of Schiller is closely akin to the idealistic style of this people's theater. Comparing Rolland's technique

with Schiller's, we may say that Rolland was thinking of a *Don Carlos* without the Eboli episodes, of a *Wallenstein* without the Thekla sentimentalities. He wished to show the people the sublimities of history, not to entertain the audience with anecdotes of popular heroes.

Thus conceived as a dramatic cycle, it was simultaneously, from the musician's outlook, to be a symphony, an "Eroica." A prelude was to introduce the whole, a pastoral in the style of the "fêtes galantes." We are at the Trianon, watching the lighthearted unconcern of the ancien régime; we are shown powdered and patched ladies, amorous cavaliers, dallying and chattering. The storm is approaching, but no one heeds it. Once again the age of gallantry smiles; the setting sun of the Grand Monarque seems to shine once more on the fading tints in the garden of Versailles.

Le 14 Juillet is the flourish of trumpets; it marks the opening of the storm. *Danton* is the critical climax; in the hour of victory comes the beginning of moral defeat, the fratricidal struggle. A *Robespierre* was to introduce the declining phase. *Le triomphe de la raison* shows the disintegration of the Revolution in the provinces; *Les loups* depicts a like decomposition in the army. Between two of the heroic plays, the author proposed to insert a love drama, describing the fate of Louvet, the Girondist. Wishing to visit his beloved in Paris, he leaves his hiding-place in Gascony, and is the only one to escape the death that overtakes his friends, who are all guillotined or torn to pieces by the wolves as they flee. The figures of Marat, Saint-Just, and Adam Lux,

which are merely touched on in the extant plays, were to receive detailed treatment in the dramas that remain unwritten. Doubtless, too, the figure of Napoleon would have towered above the dying Revolution.

Opening with a musical and lyrical prelude, this symphonic composition was to end with a postlude. After the great storm, castaways from the shipwreck were to foregather in Switzerland, near Soleure. Royalists and regicides, Girondists and Montagnards, were to exchange reminiscences; a love episode between two of their children was to lend an idyllic touch to the aftermath of the European storm. Fragments only of this great design have been carried to completion, comprising the four dramas, *Le 14 Juillet*, *Danton*, *Les loups*, and *Le triomphe de la raison*. When these plays had been written, Rolland abandoned the scheme, to which the people, like the literary world and the stage, had given no encouragement. For more than a decade these tragedies have been forgotten. To-day, perchance, the awakening impulses of an age becoming aware of its own lineaments in the prophetic image of a world convulsion, may arouse in the author an impulse to complete what was so magnificently begun.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FOURTEENTH OF JULY

1902

OF the four completed revolutionary dramas, *Le 14 Juillet* stands first in point of historic time. Here we see the Revolution as one of the elements of nature. No conscious thought has formed it; no leader has guided it. Like thunder from a clear sky comes the aimless discharge of the tensions that have accumulated among the people. The thunderbolt strikes the Bastille; the lightning flash illumines the soul of the entire nation. This piece has no heroes, for the hero of the play is the multitude. "Individuals are merged in the ocean of the people," writes Rolland in the preface. "He who limns a storm at sea, need not paint the details of every wave; he must show the unchained forces of the ocean. Meticulous precision is a minor matter compared with the impassioned truth of the whole." In actual fact, this drama is all tumultuous movement; individuals rush across the stage like figures on the cinematographic screen; the storming of the Bastille is not the outcome of a reasoned purpose, but of an overwhelming, an ecstatic impulse.

Le 14 Juillet, therefore, is not properly speaking a drama, and does not really seek to be anything of the kind. Consciously or unconsciously, Rolland aimed at creating one of those "fêtes populaires" which the Convention had encouraged, a people's festival with music and dancing, an epinikion, a triumphal ode. His work, therefore, is not suitable for the artificial environment of the boards, and should rather be played under the free heaven. Opening symphonically, it closes in exultant choruses for which the author gives definite directions to the composer. "The music must be, as it were, the background of a fresco. It must make manifest the heroical significance of the festival; it must fill in pauses as they can never be adequately filled in by a crowd of supernumeraries, for these, however much noise they make, fail to sustain the illusion of real life. This music should be inspired by that of Beethoven, which more powerfully than any other reflects the enthusiasms of the Revolution. Above all, it must breathe an ardent faith. No composer will effect anything great in this vein unless he be personally inspired by the soul of the people, unless he himself feel the burning passion that is here portrayed."

Rolland wishes to create an atmosphere of ecstatic rapture. Not by dramatic excitement, but by its opposite. The theater is to be forgotten; the multitude in the audience is to become spiritually at one with its image on the stage. In the last scene, when the phrases are directly addressed to the audience, when the stormers of the Bastille appeal to their hearers on behalf of the im-

perishable victory which leads men to break the yoke of oppression and to win brotherhood, this idea must not be a mere echo from the members of the audience, but must surge up spontaneously in their own hearts. The cry "tous frères" must be a double chorus of actors and spectators, for the latter, part of the "courant de foi," must share the intoxication of joy. The spark from their own past must rekindle in the hearts of to-day. It is manifest that words alone will not suffice to produce this effect. Hence Rolland wishes to superadd the higher spell of music, the undying goddess of pure ecstasy.

The audience of which he dreamed was not forthcoming; nor until twenty years had elapsed was he to find Doyen, the musician who was almost competent to fulfill his demands. The representation in the Gemier Theater on March 21, 1902, wasted itself in the void. His message never reached the people to whose ear it had been so vehemently addressed. Without an echo, almost pitifully, was this ode of joy drowned in the roar of the great city, which had forgotten the deeds of the past, and which failed to understand its own kinship to Rolland, the man who was recalling those deeds to memory.

CHAPTER XIV

DANTON

1900

DANTON deals with a decisive moment of the Revolution, the waterparting between the ascent and the decline. What the masses had created as elemental forces, were now being turned to personal advantage by individuals, by ambitious leaders. Every spiritual movement, and above all every revolution or reformation, knows this tragical instant of victory, when power passes into the hands of the few; when moral unity is broken in sunder by the conflict between political aims; when the masses, who in an impetuous onrush have secured freedom, blindly follow demagogues inspired solely by self-interest. It seems to be an inevitable sequel of success in such cases, that the nobler should stand aside in disillusionment, that the idealists should hold aloof while the self-seeking triumph. At that very time, in the Dreyfus affair, Rolland had witnessed similar happenings. He realized that the genuine strength of an idea subsists only during its non-fulfilment. Its true power is in the hands of those who are not victorious; those to whom the ideal is everything, success noth-

ing. Victory brings power, and power is just to itself alone.

The play, therefore, is no longer a drama of the Revolution; it is the drama of the great revolutionist. Mystical power crystallizes in the form of human characters. Resoluteness becomes contentiousness. In the very intoxication of victory, in the queasy atmosphere of the blood-stained field, begins the new struggle among the pretorians for the empire they have conquered. There is struggle between ideas; struggle between personalities; struggle between temperaments; struggle between persons of different social origin. Now that they are no longer united as comrades by the compulsion of imminent danger, they recognize their mutual incompatibilities. The revolutionary crisis comes in the hour of triumph. The hostile armies have been defeated; the royalists and the Girondists have been crushed and scattered. Now there arises in the Convention a battle of all against all. The characters are admirably delineated. Danton is the good giant, sanguine, warm, and human, a hurricane in his passions but with no love of fighting for fighting's sake. He has dreamed of the Revolution as bringing joy to mankind, and now sees that it has culminated in a new tyranny. He is sickened by bloodshed, and he detests the butcher's work of the guillotine, just as Christ would have loathed the Inquisition claiming to represent the spirit of his teaching. He is filled with horror at his fellows. "Je suis soûle des hommes. Je les vomis."—I am surfeited with men. I spue them out of my mouth. —He longs for a frank naturalness, for an unsophisti-

cated natural life. Now that the danger to the republic is over, his passion has cooled; his love goes out to woman, to the people, to happiness; he wishes others to love him. His revolutionary fervor has been the outcome of an impulse towards freedom and justice; hence he is beloved by the masses, who recognize in him the instinct which led them to storm the Bastille, the same scorn of consequence, the same marrow as their own. Robespierre is uncongenial to them. He is too frigid, he is too much the lawyer, to enlist their sympathies. But his doctrinaire fanaticism, his far from ignoble ambition, give him a terrible power which makes him forge his way onwards when Danton with his cheerful love of life has ceased to strive. Whilst Danton becomes every day more and more nauseated by politics, the concentrated energy of Robespierre's frigid temperament strikes ever closer towards the centralized control of power. Like his friend Saint-Just—the zealot of virtue, the bloodthirsty apostle of justice, the stubborn papist or calvinist —Robespierre can no longer see human beings, who for him are now hidden behind the theories, the laws, and the dogmas of the new religion. Not for him, as for Danton, the goal of a happy and free humanity. What he desires is that men shall be virtuous as the slaves of prescribed formulas. The collision between Danton and Robespierre upon the topmost summit of victory is in ultimate analysis the collision between freedom and law, between the elasticity of life and the rigidity of concepts. Danton is overthrown. He is too indolent, too heedless, too human in his defense. But even as he falls it is plain

that he will drag his opponent after him adown the precipice.

In the composition of this tragedy Rolland shows himself to be wholly the dramatist. Lyricism has disappeared; emotion has vanished amid the rush of events; the conflict arises from the liberation of human energy, from the clash of feelings and of personalities. In *Le 14 Juillet* the masses had played the principal part, but in this new phase of the Revolution they have become mere spectators once more. Their will, which had been concentrated during a brief hour of enthusiasm, has been broken into fragments, so that they are blown before every breath of oratory. The ardors of the Revolution are dissipated in intrigues. It is not the heroic instinct of the people which now dominates the situation, but the authoritarian and yet indecisive spirit of the intellectuals. Whilst in *Le 14 Juillet* Rolland exhibits to his nation the greatness of its powers; in *Danton* he depicts the danger of its all too prompt relapse into passivity, the peril that ever follows hard upon the heels of victory. From this outlook, therefore, *Danton* likewise is a call to action, an energizing elixir. Thus did Jaurès characterize it, Jaurès who himself resembled Danton in his power of oratory, introducing the work when it was staged at the Théâtre Civique on December 20, 1900—a performance forgotten in twenty-four hours, like all Rolland's early efforts.

CHAPTER XV

THE TRIUMPH OF REASON

1899

Le triomphe de la raison is no more than a fragment of the great fresco. But it is inspired with the central thought round which Rolland's ideas turn. In it for the first time there is a complete exposition of the dialectic of defeat—the passionate advocacy of the vanquished, the transformation of actual overthrow into spiritual triumph. This thought, first conceived in his childhood and reinforced by all his experience, forms the kernel of the author's moral sensibility. The Girondists have been defeated, and are defending themselves in a fortress against the sansculottes. The royalists, aided by the English, wish to rescue them. Their ideal, the freedom of the spirit and the freedom of the fatherland, has been destroyed by the Revolution; their foes are Frenchmen. But the royalists who would help them are likewise their enemies; the English are their country's foes. Hence arises a conflict of conscience which is powerfully portrayed. Are they to be faithless to their ideal, or to betray their country? Are they to be citizens of the spirit or citizens of France?

Are they to be true to themselves or true to the nation? Such is the fateful decision with which they are confronted. They choose death, for they know that their ideal is immortal, that the freedom of a nation is but the reflection of an inner freedom which no foe can destroy.

For the first time, in this play, Rolland proclaims his hostility to victory. Faber proudly declares: "We have saved our faith from a victory which would have disgraced us, from one wherein the conqueror is the first victim. In our unsullied defeat, that faith looms more richly and gloriously than before." Lux, the German revolutionist, proclaims the gospel of inner freedom in the words: "All victory is evil, whereas all defeat is good in so far as it is the outcome of free choice." Hugot says: "I have outstripped victory, and that is my victory." These men of noble mind who perish, know that they die alone; they do not look towards a future success; they put no trust in the masses, for they are aware that in the higher sense of the term freedom it is a thing which the multitude can never understand, that the people always misconceives the best. "The people always dreads those who form an elite, for these bear torches. Would that the fire might scorch the people!" In the end, the only home of these Girondists is the ideal; their domain is an ideal freedom; their world is the future. They have saved their country from the despots; now they had to defend it once again against the mob lusting for dominion and revenge, against those who care no more for freedom than the despots cared. Designedly, the rigid nationalists, those who demand that a

man shall sacrifice everything for his country, shall sacrifice his convictions, liberty, reason itself, designedly I say are these monomaniacs of patriotism typified in the plebeian figure of Haubourdin. This sansculotte knows only two kinds of men, "traitors" and "patriots," thus rending the world in twain in his bigotry. It is true that the vigor of his brutal partisanship brings victory. But the very force that makes it possible to save a people against a world in arms, is at the same time a force which destroys that people's most gracious blossoms.

The drama is the opening of an ode to the free man, to the hero of the spirit, the only hero whose heroism Rolland acknowledges. The conception, which had been merely outlined in *Aërt*, begins here to take more definite shape. Adam Lux, a member of the Mainz revolutionary club, who, animated by the fire of enthusiasm, has made his way to France that he may live for freedom (and that he may be led in pursuit of freedom to the guillotine), this first martyr to idealism, is the first messenger from the land of Jean Christophe. The struggle of the free man for the undying fatherland which is above and beyond the land of his birth, has begun. This is the struggle wherein the vanquished is ever the victor, and wherein he is the strongest who fights alone.

CHAPTER XVI

THE WOLVES

1898

IN *Le triomphe de la raison,* men to whom conscience is supreme were confronted with a vital decision. They had to choose between their country and freedom, between the intrests of the nation and those of the supranational spirit. *Les loups* embodies a variation of the same theme. Here the choice has to be made between the fatherland and justice.

The subject has already been mooted in *Danton.* Robespierre and his henchmen decide upon the execution of Danton. They demand his immediate arrest and condemnation. Saint-Just, passionately opposed to Danton, makes no objection to the prosecution, but insists that all must be done in due form of law. Robespierre, aware that delay will give the victory to Danton, wishes the law to be infringed. His country is worth more to him than the law. "Vaincre à tout prix"—conquer at any cost—calls one. "When the country is in danger, it matters nothing that one man should be illegally condemned," cries another. Saint-Just bows

before the argument, sacrificing honor to expediency, the law to his fatherland.

In *Les loups,* we have the obverse of the same tragedy. Here is depicted a man who would rather sacrifice himself than the law. One who holds with Faber in *Le triomphe de la raison* that a single injustice makes the whole world unjust; one to whom, as to Hugot, the other hero in the same play, it seems indifferent whether justice be victorious or be defeated, so long as justice does not give up the struggle. Teulier, the man of learning, knows that his enemy d'Oyron has been unjustly accused of treachery. Though he realizes that the case is hopeless and that he is wasting his pains, he undertakes to defend d'Oyron against the patriotic savagery of the revolutionary soldiers, to whom victory is the only argument. Adopting as his motto the old saying, "fiat justitia, pereat mundus," facing open-eyed all the dangers this involves, he would rather repudiate life than the leadings of the spirit. "A soul which has seen truth and seeks to deny truth, destroys itself." But the others are of tougher fiber, and think only of success in arms. "Let my name be besmirched, provided only my country is saved," is Quesnel's answer to Teulier. Patriotism, the faith of the masses, triumphs over the heroism of faith in the invisible justice.

This tragedy of a conflict recurring throughout the ages, one which every individual has forced upon him in wartime through the need for choosing between his responsibilities as a free moral agent and as an obedient

citizen of the state, was the reflection of the actual happenings during the days when it was written. In *Les loups,* the Dreyfus affair is emblematically presented in masterly fashion. Dreyfus the Jew is typified by an aristocrat, the member of a suspect and detested social stratum. Picquart, the defender of Dreyfus, is Teulier. The aristocrat's enemies represent the French general headquarters staff, who would rather perpetuate an injustice once committed than allow the honor of the army to be tarnished or confidence in the army to be undermined. Upon a narrow stage, and yet with effective pictorial force, in this tragedy of army life was compressed the whole of the history which was agitating France from the presidential palace down to the humblest working-class dwelling. The performance at the Théatre de l'Oeuvre on May 18, 1898, was from first to last a political demonstration. Zola, Scheurer-Kestner, Péguy, and Picquart, the defenders of the innocent man, all the chief figures in the world-famous trial, were for two hours spectators of the dramatic symbolization of their own deeds. Rolland had grasped and extracted the moral essence of the Dreyfus affair, which had in fact become a purifying process for the whole French nation. Leaving history, the author had made his first venture into the field of contemporary actuality. But he had done this only, in accordance with the method he has followed ever since, that he might disclose the eternal elements in the temporal, and defend freedom of opinion against mob infatuation. He was on this occasion what

he has always remained, the advocate of that heroism which knows one authority only, neither fatherland nor victory, neither success nor expediency, nothing but the supreme authority of conscience.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CALL LOST IN THE VOID

THE ears of the people were deaf. Rolland's work seemed to have been fruitless. Not one of the dramas was played for more than a few nights. Most of them were buried after a single performance, slain by the hostility of the critics and the indifference of the crowd. Futile, too, had been the struggles of Rolland and his friends on behalf of the people's theater. The government to which they had addressed an appeal for the founding of a popular theater in Paris, paid little attention. M. Adrien Bernheim was dispatched to Berlin to make inquiries. He reported. Further reports were made. The matter was discussed for a while, but was ultimately shelved. Rostand and Bernstein continued to triumph in the boulevards; the great call to idealism had remained unheard.

Where could the author look for help in the completion of his splendid program? To what nation could he turn when his own made no response, *Le théatre de la révolution* remained a fragment. A *Robespierre,* which was to be the spiritual counterpart of *Danton,* already sketched in broad outline, was left unfinished. The other segments of the great dramatic cycle have never

been touched. Bundles of studies, newspaper cuttings, loose leaves, manuscript books, waste paper, are the vestiges of an edifice which was planned as a pantheon for the French people, a theater which was to reflect the heroic achievements of the French spirit. Rolland may well have shared the feelings of Goethe who, mournfully recalling his earlier dramatic dreams, said on one occasion to Eckermann: "Formerly I fancied it would be possible to create a German theater. I cherished the illusion that I could myself contribute to the foundations of such a building . . . But there was no stir in response to my efforts, and everything remains as of old. Had I been able to exert an influence, had I secured approval, I should have written a dozen plays like *Iphigenia* and *Tasso*. There was no scarcity of material. But, as I have told you, we lack actors to play such pieces with spirit, and we lack a public to form an appreciative audience."

The call was lost in the void. "There was no stir in response to my efforts, and everything remains as of old." But Rolland, likewise, remains as of old, inspired with the same faith, whether he has succeeded or whether he has failed. He is ever willing to begin work over again, marching stoutly across the land of lost endeavor towards a new and more distant goal. We may apply to him Rilke's fine phrase, and say that, if he needs must be vanquished, he aspires "to be vanquished always in a greater and yet greater cause."

CHAPTER XVIII

A DAY WILL COME

1902

ONCE only has Rolland been tempted to resume dramatic composition. (Parenthetically I may mention a minor play of the same period, *La Montespan,* which does not belong to the series of his greater works.) As in the case of the Dreyfus affair, he endeavored to extract the moral essence from political occurrences, to show how a spiritual conflict was typified in one of the great happenings of the time. The Boer War is no more than a vehicle; just as, for the plays we have been studying, the Revolution was merely a stage. The new drama deals in actual fact with the only auhority Rolland rcognizes, conscience. The conscience of the individual and the conscience of the world.

Le temps viendra is the third, the most impressive variation upon the earlier theme, depicting the cleavage between conviction and duty, citizenship and humanity, the national man and the free man. A war drama of the conscience staged amid a war in the material world. In *Le triomphe de la raison,* the problem was one of freedom versus the fatherland; in *Les loups* it was one of

justice versus the fatherland. Here we have a yet loftier variation of the theme; the conflict of conscience, of eternal truth, versus the fatherland. The chief figure, though not spiritually the hero of the piece, is Clifford, leader of the invading army. He is waging an unjust war—and what war is just? But he wages it with a strategist's brain; his heart is not in the work. He knows "how much rottenness there is in war"; he knows that war cannot be effectively waged without hatred for the enemy; but he is too cultured to hate. He knows that it is impossible to carry on war without falsehood; impossible to kill without infringing the principles of humanity; impossible to create military justice, since the whole aim of war is unjust. He knows this with one part of his being, which is the real Clifford; but he has to repudiate the knowledge with the other part of his being, the professional soldier. He is confined within an iron ring of contradictions. "Obéir à ma patrie? Obéir à ma conscience?" It is impossible to gain the victory without doing wrong, yet who can command an army if he lack the will to conquer? Clifford must serve that will, even while he despises the force which his duty compels him to use. He cannot be a man unless he thinks, and yet he cannot remain a soldier while preserving his humanity. Vainly does he seek to mitigate the brutalities of his task; fruitlessly does he endeavor to do good amid the bloodshed which issues from his orders. He is aware that "there are gradations in crime, but every one of these gradations remains a crime."

Other notable figures in the play are: the cynic, whose only aim is the profit of his own country; the army sportsman; those who blindly obey; the sentimentalist, who shuts his eyes to all that is painful, contemplating as a puppet-show what is tragedy to those who have to endure it. The background to these figures is the lying spirit of contemporary civilization, with its neat phrases to justify every outrage, and its factories built upon tombs. To our civilization applies the charge inscribed upon the opening page, raising the drama into the sphere of universal humanity: "This play has not been written to condemn a single nation, but to condemn Europe."

The true hero of the piece is not General Clifford, the conqueror of South Africa, but the free spirit, as typified in the Italian volunteer, a citizen of the world who threw himself into the fray that he might defend freedom, and in the Scottish peasant who lays aside his rifle with the words, "I will kill no longer." These men have no other fatherland than conscience, no other home than their own humanity. The only fate they acknowledge is that which the free man creates for himself. Rolland is with them, the vanquished, as he is ever with those who voluntarily accept defeat. It is from his soul that rises the cry of the Italian volunteer, "Ma patrie est partout où la liberté est menacée." Aërt, Saint Louis, Hugot, the Girondists, Teulier, the martyrs in *Les loups*, are the author's spiritual brethren, the children of his belief that the individual's will is stronger than his secu-

lar environment. This faith grows ever greater, takes on an ever wider oscillation, as the years pass. In his first plays he was still speaking to France. His last work written for the stage addresses a wider audience; it is his confession of world citizenship.

CHAPTER XIX

THE PLAYWRIGHT

WE have seen that Rolland's plays form a whole, which for comprehensiveness may be compared with the work of Shakespeare, Schiller, or Hebbel. Recent stage performances in Germany have shown that in places, at least, they possess great dramatic force. The historical fact that work of such magnitude and power should remain for twenty years practically unknown, must have some deeper cause than chance. The effect of a literary composition is always in large part dependent upon the atmosphere of the time. Sometimes this atmosphere may so operate as to make it seem that a spark has fallen into a powder-barrel heaped full of accumulated sensibilities. Sometimes the influence of the atmosphere may be repressive in manifold ways. A work, therefore, taken alone, can never reflect an epoch. Such reflection can only be secured when the work is harmonious to the epoch in which it originates.

We infer that the innermost essence of Rolland's plays must in one way or another have conflicted with the age in which they were written. In actual fact, these dramas were penned in deliberate opposition to the dominant

literary mode. Naturalism, the representation of reality, simultaneously mastered and oppressed the time, leading back with intent into the narrows, the trivialities, of everyday life. Rolland, on the other hand, aspired towards greatness, wishing to raise the dynamic of undying ideals high above the transiencies of fact; he aimed at a soaring flight, at a winged freedom of sentiment, at exuberant energy; he was a romanticist and an idealist. Not for him to describe the forces of life, its distresses, its powers, and its passions; his purpose was ever to depict the spirit that overcomes these things; the idea through which to-day is merged into eternity. Whilst other writers were endeavoring to portray everyday occurrences with the utmost fidelity, his aim was to represent the rare, the sublime, the heroic, the seeds of eternity that fall from heaven to germinate on earth. He was not allured by life as it is, but by life freely interpenetrated with spirit and with will.

All his dramas, therefore, are problem plays, wherein the characters are but the expression of theses and antitheses in dialectical struggle. The idea, not the living figure, is the primary thing. When the persons of the drama are in conflict, above them, like the gods in the Iliad, hover unseen the ideas that lead the human protagonists, the ideas between which the struggle is really waged. Rolland's heroes are not impelled to action by the force of circumstances, but are lured to action by the fascination of their own thoughts; the circumstances are merely the friction-surfaces upon which their ardor is struck into flame. When to the eye of the realist

they are vanquished, when Aërt plunges into death, when Saint Louis is consumed by fever, when the heroes of the Revolution stride to the guillotine, when Clifford and Owen fall victims to violence, the tragedy of their mortal lives is transfigured by the heroism of their martyrdom, by the unity and purity of realized ideals.

Rolland has openly proclaimed the name of the intellectual father of his tragedies. Shakespeare was no more than the burning bush, the first herald, the stimulus, the inimitable model. To Shakespeare, Rolland owes his impetus, his ardor, and in part his dialectical power. But as far as spiritual form is concerned, he has picked up the mantle of another master, one whose work as dramatist still remains almost unknown. I refer to Ernest Renan, and to the *Drames philosophiques,* among which *L'abbesse de Jouarre* and *Le prêtre de Nemi* exercised a decisive influence upon the younger playwright. The art of discussing spiritual problems in actual drama instead of in essays or in such dialogues as those of Plato, was a legacy from Renan, who gave kindly help and instruction to the aspiring student. From Renan, too, came the inner calm of justice, together with the clarity which never failed to lift the writer above the conflicts he was describing. But whereas the sage of Tréguier, in his serene aloofness, regarded all human activities as a perpetually renewed illusion, so that his works voiced a somewhat ironical and even malicious skepticism, in Rolland we find a new element, the flame of an idealism that is still undimmed to-day. Strange indeed is the paradox, that one who of all modern writers is the

most fervent in his faith, should borrow the artistic forms he employs from the master of cautious doubt. Hence what in Renan had a retarding and cooling influence, becomes in Rolland a cause of vigorous and enthusiastic action. Whilst Renan stripped all the legends, even the most sacred of legends, bare, in his search for a wise but tepid truth, Rolland is led by his revolutionary temperament to create a new legend, a new heroism, a new emotional spur to action.

This ideological scaffolding is unmistakable in every one of Rolland's dramas. The scenic variations, the motley changes in the cultural environments, cannot prevent our realizing that the problems revealed to our eyes emanate, not from feelings and not from personalities, but from intelligences and from ideas. Even the historical figures, those of Robespierre, Danton, Saint-Just, and Desmoulins, are schemata rather than portraits. Nevertheless, the prolonged estrangement between his dramas and the age in which they were written, was not so much due to the playwright's method of treatment as to the nature of the problems with which he chose to deal. Ibsen, who at that time dominated the drama, likewise wrote plays with a purpose. Ibsen, far more even than Rolland, had definite ends in view. Like Strindberg, Ibsen did not merely wish to present comparisons between elemental forces, but in addition to present their formulation. These northern writers intellectualized much more than Rolland, inasmuch as they were propagandists, whereas Rolland merely endeavored to show ideas in the act of unfolding their own contradictions.

Ibsen and Strindberg desired to make converts; Rolland's aim was to display the inner energy that animates every idea. Whilst the northerners hoped to produce a specific effect, Rolland was in search of a general effect, the arousing of enthusiasm. For Ibsen, as for the contemporary French dramatists, the conflict between man and woman living in the bourgeois environment always occupies the center of the stage. Strindberg's work is animated by the myth of sexual polarity. The lie against which both these writers are campaigning is a conventional, a social, lie. The dramatic interest remains the same. The spiritual arena is still that of bourgeois life. This applies even to the mathematical sobriety of Ibsen and to the remorseless analysis of Strindberg. Despite the vituperation of the critics, the world of Ibsen and Strindberg was still the critics' world.

On the other hand, the problems with which Rolland's plays were concerned could never awaken the interest of a bourgeois public, for they were political, ideal, heroic, revolutionary problems. The surge of his more comprehensive feelings engulfed the lesser tensions of sex. Rolland's dramas leave the erotic problem untouched, and this damns them for a modern audience. He presents a new type, political drama in the sense phrased by Napoleon, conversing with Goethe at Erfurt. "La politique, voilà la fatalité moderne." The tragic dramatist always displays human beings in conflict with forces. Man becomes great through his resistance to these forces. In Greek tragedy the powers of fate assumed mythical forms: the wrath of the gods, the disfavor of evil spirits,

disastrous oracles. We see this in the figures of Oedipus, Prometheus, and Philoctetes. For us moderns, it is the overwhelming power of the state, organized political force, massed destiny, against which as individuals we stand weaponless; it is the great spiritual storms, "les courants de foi," which inexorably sweep us away like straws before the wind. No less incalculably than did the fabled gods of antiquity, no less overwhelmingly and pitilessly, does the world-destiny make us its sport. War is the most powerful of these mass influences, and, for this reason, nearly all Rolland's plays take war as their theme. Their moral force consists in the way wherein again and again they show how the individual, a Prometheus in conflict with the gods, is able in the spiritual sphere to break the unseen yoke; how the individual idea remains stronger than the mass idea, the idea of the fatherland—though the latter can still destroy a hardy rebel with the thunderbolts of Jupiter.

The Greeks first knew the gods when the gods were angry. Our gloomy divinity, the fatherland, bloodthirsty as the gods of old, first becomes fully known to us in time of war. Unless fate lowers, man rarely thinks of these hostile forces; he despises them or forgets them, while they lurk in the darkness, awaiting the advent of their day. A peaceful, a laodicean era had no interest in tragedies foreshadowing the opposition of the forces which were twenty years later to engage in deadly struggle in the bloodstained European arena. What should those care who strayed into the theater from the Parisian boulevards, members of an audience skilled in the geom-

etry of adultery, what should they care about such problems as those in Rolland's plays: whether it is better to serve the fatherland or to serve justice; whether in war time soldiers must obey orders or follow the call of conscience? The questions seemed at best but idle trifling, remote from reality, charades, the untimely musings of a cloistered moralist; problems in the fourth dimension. "What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba?" —though in truth it would have been well to heed Cassandra's warning. The tragedy and the greatness of Rolland's plays lies in this, that they came a generation before their day. They seem to have been written for the time we have just had to live through. They seem to foretell in lofty symbols the spiritual content of today's political happenings. The outburst of a revolution, the concentration of its energies into individual personalities, the decline of passion into brutality and into suicidal chaos, as typified in the figures of Kerensky, Lenin, Liebknecht, is the anticipatory theme of Rolland's plays. The anguish of Aërt, the struggles of the Girondists who had likewise to defend themselves upon two fronts, against the brutality of war and against the brutality of the Revolution—have we not all of late realized these things with the vividness of personal experience? Since 1914, what question has been more pressing than that of the conflict between the free-spirited internationalist and the mass frenzy of his fellow countrymen? Where, during recent decades, has there been produced any other drama which can present these soul-searching problems so vividly and with so much human

understanding as do the tragedies which lay for years in obscurity, and were then overshadowed by the fame of their late-born brother, *Jean Christophe?* These dramas, parerga as it seemed, were aimed, in an hour when peace still ruled the world, at the center of our contemporary consciousness, which was then still unwoven by the looms of time. The stone which the builders of the stage contemptuously rejected, will perhaps become the foundation of a new theater, grandly conceived, contemporary and yet heroical, the theater of the free European brotherhood, for whose sake it was fashioned in solitude decades ago by the lonely creator.

PART THREE

THE HEROIC BIOGRAPHIES

> I prepare myself by the study of history and the practice of writing. So doing, I welcome always in my soul the memory of the best and most renowned of men. For whenever the enforced associations of daily life arouse worthless, evil, or ignoble feelings, I am able to repel these feelings and to keep them at a distance, by dispassionately turning my thoughts to contemplate the brightest examples.
>
> PLUTARCH, *Preamble to the Life of Timoleon.*

CHAPTER I

DE PROFUNDIS

AT twenty years of age, and again at thirty years of age, in his early works, Rolland had wished to depict enthusiasm as the highest power of the individual and as the creative soul of an entire people. For him, that man alone is truly alive whose spirit is consumed with longing for the ideal, that nation alone is inspired which collects its forces in an ardent faith. The dream of his youth was to arouse a weary and vanquished generation, infirm of will; to stimulate its faith; to bring salvation to the world through enthusiasm.

Vain had been the attempt. Ten years, fifteen years —how easily the phrase is spoken, but how long the time may seem to a sad heart—had been spent in fruitless endeavor. Disillusionment had followed upon disillusionment. *Le théatre du peuple* had come to nothing; the Dreyfus affair had been merged in political intrigue; the dramas were waste paper. There had been no stir in response to his efforts. His friends were scattered. Whilst the companions of his youth had already attained to fame, Rolland was still the beginner. It almost seemed as if the more he did, the more his work was ignored. None of his aims had been fulfilled.

Public life was lukewarm and torpid as of old. The world was in search of profit instead of faith and spiritual force.

His private life likewise lay in ruins. His marriage, entered into with high hopes, was one more disappointment. During these years Rolland had individual experience of a tragedy whose cruelty his work leaves unnoticed, for his writings never touch upon the narrower troubles of his own life. Wounded to the heart, shipwrecked in all his undertakings, he withdrew into solitude. His workroom, small and simple as a monastic cell, became his world; work his consolation. He had now to fight the hardest fight on behalf of the faith of his youth, that he might not lose it in the darkness of despair.

In his solitude he read the literature of the day. And since in all voices man hears the echo of his own, Rolland found everywhere pain and loneliness. He studied the lives of the artists, and having done so he wrote: "The further we penetrate into the existence of great creators, the more strongly are we impressed by the magnitude of the unhappiness by which their lives were enveloped. I do not merely mean that, being subject to the ordinary trials and disappointments of mankind, their higher emotional susceptibility rendered these smarts exceptionally keen. I mean that their genius, placing them in advance of their contemporaries by twenty, thirty, fifty, nay often a hundred years, and thus making of them wanderers in the desert, condemned them to the most desperate exertions if they were but to

live, to say nothing of winning to victory." Thus these great ones among mankind, those towards whom posterity looks back with veneration, those who will for all time bring consolation to the lonely in spirit, were themselves "pauvres vaincus, les vainqueurs du monde"—the conquerors of the world, but themselves beaten in the fray. An endless chain of perpetually repeated and unmeaning torments binds their successive destinies into a tragical unity. "Never," as Tolstoi pointed out in the oft-mentioned letter, "do true artists share the common man's power of contented enjoyment." The greater their natures, the greater their suffering. And conversely, the greater their suffering the fuller the development of their own greatness.

Rolland thus recognizes that there is another greatness, a profounder greatness, than that of action, the greatness of suffering. Unthinkable would be a Rolland who did not draw fresh faith from all experience, however painful; unthinkable one who failed, in his own suffering, to be mindful of the sufferings of others. As a sufferer, he extends a greeting to all sufferers on earth. Instead of a fellowship of enthusiasm, he now looks for a brotherhood of the lonely ones of the world, as he shows them the meaning and the grandeur of all sorrow. In this new circle, the nethermost of fate, he turns to noble examples. "Life is hard. It is a continuous struggle for all those who cannot come to terms with mediocrity. For the most part it is a painful struggle, lacking sublimity, lacking happiness, fought in solitude and silence. Oppressed by poverty, by domes-

tic cares, by crushing and gloomy tasks demanding an aimless expenditure of energy, joyless and hopeless, most people work in isolation, without even the comfort of being able to stretch forth a hand to their brothers in misfortune." To build these bridges between man and man, between suffering and suffering, is now Rolland's task. To the nameless sufferers, he wishes to show those in whom personal sorrow was transmuted to become gain for millions yet to come. He would, as Carlyle phrased it, "make manifest . . . the divine relation . . . which at all times unites a Great Man to other men." The million solitaries have a fellowship; it is that of the great martyrs of suffering, those who, though stretched on the rack of destiny, never foreswore their faith in life, those whose very sufferings helped to make life richer for others. "Let them not complain too piteously, the unhappy ones, for the best of men share their lot. It is for us to grow strong with their strength. If we feel our weakness, let us rest on their knees. They will give solace. From their spirits radiate energy and goodness. Even if we did not study their works, even if we did not hearken to their voices, from the light of their countenances, from the fact that they have lived, we should know that life is never greater, never more fruitful—never happier—than in suffering."

It was in this spirit, for his own good, and for the consolation of his unknown brothers in sorrow, that Rolland undertook the composition of the heroic biographies.

CHAPTER II

THE HEROES OF SUFFERING

LIKE the revolutionary dramas, the new creative cycle was preluded by a manifesto, a new call to greatness. The preface to *Beethoven* proclaims: "The air is fetid. Old Europe is suffocating in a sultry and unclean atmosphere. Our thoughts are weighed down by a petty materialism. . . . The world sickens in a cunning and cowardly egoism. We are stifling. Throw the windows wide; let in the free air of heaven. We must breathe the souls of the heroes."

What does Rolland mean by a hero? He does not think of those who lead the masses, wage victorious wars, kindle revolutions; he does not refer to men of action, or to those whose thoughts engender action. The nullity of united action has become plain to him. Unconsciously in his dramas he has depicted the tragedy of the idea as something which cannot be divided among men like bread, as something which in each individual's brain and blood undergoes prompt transformation into a new form, often into its very opposite. True greatness is for him to be found only in solitude, in struggle waged by the individual against the unseen. "I do not give the name of heroes to those who have triumphed,

whether by ideas or by physical force. By heroes I mean those who were great through the power of the heart. As one of the greatest (Tolstoi) has said, 'I recognize no other sign of superiority than goodness. Where the character is not great, there is neither a great artist nor a great man of action; there is nothing but one of the idols of the crowd; time will shatter them together. . . . What matters, is to be great, not to seem great.'"

A hero does not fight for the petty achievements of life, for success, for an idea in which all can participate; he fights for the whole, for life itself. Whoever turns his back on the struggle because he dreads to be alone, is a weakling who shrinks from suffering; he is one who with a mask of artificial beauty would conceal from himself the tragedy of mortal life; he is a liar. True heroism is that which faces realities. Rolland fiercely exclaims: "I loathe the cowardly idealism of those who refuse to see the tragedies of life and the weaknesses of the soul. To a nation that is prone to the deceitful illusions of resounding words, to such a nation above all, is it necessary to say that the heroic falsehood is a form of cowardice. There is but one heroism on earth—to know life and yet to love it."

Suffering is not the great man's goal. But it is his ordeal; the needful filter to effect purification; "the swiftest beast of burden bearing us towards perfection," as Meister Eckhart said. "In suffering alone do we rightly understand art; through sorrow alone do we learn those things which outlast the centuries, and are

stronger than death." Thus for the great man, the painful experiences of life are transmuted into knowledge, and this knowledge is further transmuted into the power of love. Suffering does not suffice by itself to produce greatness; we need to have achieved a triumph over suffering. He who is broken by the distresses of life, and still more he who shirks the troubles of life, is stamped with the imprint of defeat, and even his noblest work will bear the marks of this overthrow. None but he who rises from the depths, can bring a message to the heights of the spirit; paradise must be reached by a path that leads through purgatory. Each must discover this path for himself; but the one who strides along it with head erect is a leader, and can lift others into his own world. "Great souls are like mountain peaks. Storms lash them; clouds envelop them; but on the peaks we breathe more freely than elsewhere. In that pure atmosphere, the wounds of the heart are cleansed; and when the cloudbanks part, we gain a view of all mankind."

To such lofty outlooks Rolland wishes to lead the sufferers who are still in the darkness of torment. He desires to show them the heights where suffering grows one with nature and where struggle becomes heroic. "Sursum corda," he sings, chanting a song of praise as he reveals the sublime pictures of creative sorrow.

CHAPTER III

BEETHOVEN

BEETHOVEN, the master of masters, is the first figure sculptured on the heroic frieze of the invisible temple. From Rolland's earliest years, since his beloved mother had initiated him into the magic world of music, Beethoven had been his teacher, had been at once his monitor and consoler. Though fickle to other childish loves, to this love he had ever remained faithful. "During the crises of doubt and depression which I experienced in youth, one of Beethoven's melodies, one which still runs in my head, would reawaken in me the spark of eternal life." By degrees the admiring pupil came to feel a desire for closer acquaintance with the earthly existence of the object of his veneration. Journeying to Vienna, he saw there the room in the House of the Black Spaniard, since demolished, where the great musician passed away during a storm. At Mainz, in 1901, he attended the Beethoven festival. In Bonn he saw the garret in which the messiah of the language without words was born. It was a shock to him to find in what narrow straits this universal genius had passed his days. He perused letters and other documents conveying the cruel history of Bee-

thoven's daily life, the life from which the musician, stricken with deafness, took refuge in the music of the inner, the imperishable universe. Shudderingly Rolland came to realize the greatness of this "tragic Dionysus," cribbed in our somber and unfeeling world.

After the visit to Bonn, Rolland wrote an article for the "*Revue de Paris,*" entitled *Les fêtes de Beethoven.* His muse, however, desired to sing without restraint, freed from the trammels imposed by critical contemplation. Rolland wished, not once again to expound the musician to musicians, but to reveal the hero to humanity at large; not to recount the pleasure experienced on hearing Beethoven's music, but to give utterance to the poignancy of his own feelings. He desired to show forth Beethoven the hero, as the man who, after infinite suffering, composed the greatest hymn of mankind, the divine exultation of the Ninth Symphony.

"Beloved Beethoven," thus the enthusiast opens. "Enough . . . many have extolled his greatness as an artist, but he is far more than the first of all musicians. He is the heroic energy of modern art, the greatest and best friend of all who suffer and struggle. When we mourn over the sorrows of the world, he comes to our solace. It is as if he seated himself at the piano in the room of a bereaved mother, comforting her with the wordless song of resignation. When we are wearied by the unending and fruitless struggle against mediocrity in vice and in virtue, what an unspeakable delight is it to plunge once more into this ocean of will and faith. He radiates the contagion of courage, the joy of combat,

the intoxication of spirit which God himself feels. . . . What victory is comparable to this? What conquest of Napoleon's? What sun of Austerlitz can compare in refulgence with this superhuman effort, this triumph of the spirit, achieved by a poor and unhappy man, by a lonely invalid, by one who, though he was sorrow incarnate, though life denied him joy, was able to create joy that he might bestow it on the world. As he himself proudly phrases it, he forges joy out of his own misfortunes. . . . The device of every heroic soul must be: Out of suffering cometh joy."

Thus does Rolland apostrophize the unknown. Finally he lets the master speak from his own life. He opens the Heiligenstadt "Testament," in which the retiring man confided to posterity the profound grief which he concealed from his contemporaries. He recounts the confession of faith of the sublime pagan. He quotes letters showing the kindliness which the great musician vainly endeavored to hide behind an assumed acerbity. Never before had the universal humanity in Beethoven been brought so near to the sight of our generation, never before had the heroism of this lonely life been so magnificently displayed for the encouragement of countless observers, as in this little book, with its appeal to enthusiasm, the greatest and most neglected of human qualities.

The brethren of sorrow to whom the message was addressed, scattered here and there throughout the world, gave ear to the call. The book was not a literary triumph; the newspapers were silent; the critics ignored

Romain Rolland at the time of writing *Beethoven*

it. But unknown strangers won happiness from its pages; they passed it from hand to hand; a mystical sense of gratitude for the first time formed a bond of union among persons reverencing the name of Rolland. The unhappy have an ear delicately attuned to the notes of consolation. While they would have been repelled by a superficial optimism, they were receptive to the passionate sympathy which they found in the pages of Rolland's *Beethoven*. The book did not bring its author success; but it brought something better, a public which henceforward paid close attention to his work, and accompanied *Jean Christophe* in the first steps toward celebrity. Simultaneously, there was an improvement in the fortunes of "*Les cahiers de la quinzaine*." The obscure periodical began to circulate more freely. For the first time, a second edition was called for. Charles Péguy describes in moving terms how the reissue of this number solaced the last hours of Bernard Lazare. At length Romain Rolland's idealism was beginning to come into its own.

Rolland is no longer lonely. Unseen brothers touch his hand in the dark, eagerly await the sound of his voice. Only those who suffer, wish to hear of suffering —but sufferers are many. To them he now wishes to make known other figures, the figures of those who suffered no less keenly, and were no less great in their conquest of suffering. From the distance of the centuries, the mighty contemplate him. Reverently he draws near to them and enters into their lives.

CHAPTER IV

MICHELANGELO

BEETHOVEN is for Rolland the most typical of the controllers of sorrow. Born to enjoy the fullness of life, it seemed to be his mission to reveal its beauties. Then destiny, ruining the sense-organ of music, incarcerated him in the prison of deafness. But his spirit discovered a new language; in the darkness he made a great light, composing the Ode to Joy whose strains he was unable to hear. Bodily affliction, however, is but one of the many forms of sufferering which the heroism of the will can conquer. "Suffering is infinite, and displays itself in myriad ways. Sometimes it arises from the blind things of tyranny, coming as poverty, sickness, the injustice of fate, or the wickedness of men; sometimes its deepest cause lies in the sufferer's own nature. This is no less lamentable, no less disastrous; for we do not choose our own dispositions, we have not asked for life as it is given us, we have not wished to become what we are."

Such was the tragedy of Michelangelo. His trouble was not a sudden stroke of misfortune in the flower of his days. The affliction was inborn. From the first dawning of his consciousness, the worm of discontent was

gnawing at his heart, the worm which grew with his growth throughout the eighty years of his life. All his feeling was tinged with melancholy. Never do we hear from him, as we so often hear from Beethoven, the golden call of joy. But his greatness lay in this, that he bore his sorrows like a cross, a second Christ carrying the burden of his destiny to the Golgotha of his daily work, eternally weary of existence, and yet not weary of activity. Or we may compare him with Sisyphus; but whereas Sisyphus for ever rolled the stone, it was Michelangelo's fate, chiseling in rage and bitterness, to fashion the patient stone into works of art. For Rolland, Michelangelo was the genius of a great and vanished age; he was the Christian, unhappy but patient, whereas Beethoven was the pagan, the great god Pan in the forest of music. Michelangelo shares the blame for his own suffering, the blame that attaches to weakness, the blame of those damned souls in Dante's first circle "who voluntarily gave themselves up to sadness." We must show him compassion as a man, but as we show compassion to one mentally diseased, for he is the paradox of "a heroic genius with an unheroic will." Beethoven is the hero as artist, and still more the hero as man; Michelangelo is only the hero as artist. As man, Michelangelo is the vanquished, unloved because he does not give himself up to love, unsatisfied because he has no longing for joy. He is the saturnine man, born under a gloomy star, one who does not struggle against melancholy, but rather cherishes it, toying with his own depression. "La mia allegrezza è la malincolia"—mel-

ancholy is my delight. He frankly acknowledges that "a thousand joys are not worth as much as a single sorrow." From the beginning to the end of his life he seems to be hewing his way, cutting an interminable dark gallery leading towards the light. This way is his greatness, leading us all nearer towards eternity.

Rolland feels that Michelangelo's life embraces a great heroism, but cannot give direct consolation to those who suffer. In this case, the one who lacks is not able to come to terms with destiny by his own strength, for he needs a mediator beyond this life. He needs God, "the refuge of all those who do not make a success of life here below! Faith which is apt to be nothing other than lack of faith in life, in the future, in oneself; a lack of courage; a lack of joy. We know upon how many defeats this painful victory is upbuilded." Rolland here admires a work, and a sublime melancholy; but he does so with sorrowful compassion, and not with the intoxicating ardor inspired in him by the triumph of Beethoven. Michelangelo is chosen merely as an example of the amount of pain that may have to be endured in our mortal lot. His example displays greatness, but greatness that conveys a warning. Who conquers pain in producing such work, is in truth a victor. Yet only half a victor; for it does not suffice to endure life. We must, this is the highest heroism, "know life, and yet love it."

CHAPTER V

TOLSTOI

THE biographies of Beethoven and Michelangelo were fashioned out of the superabundance of life. They were calls to heroism, odes to energy. The biography of Tolstoi, written some years later, is a requiem, a dirge. Rolland had been near to death from the accident in the Champs Elysées. On his recovery, the news of his beloved master's end came to him with profound significance and as a sublime exhortation.

Tolstoi typifies for Rolland a third form of heroic suffering. Beethoven's infirmity came as a stroke of fate in mid career. Michelangelo's sad destiny was inborn. Tolstoi deliberately chose his own lot. All the externals of happiness promised enjoyment. He was in good health, rich, independent, famous; he had home, wife, and children. But the heroism of the man without cares lies in this, that he makes cares for himself, through doubt as to the best way to live. What plagued Tolstoi was his conscience, his inexorable demand for truth. He thrust aside the freedom from care, the low aims, the petty joys, of insincere beings. Like a fakir, he pierced his own breast with the thorns of doubt.

Amid the torment, he blessed doubt, saying: "We must thank God if we be discontented with ourselves. A cleavage between life and the form in which it has to be lived, is the genuine sign of a true life, the precondition of all that is good. The only bad thing is to be contented with oneself."

For Rolland, this apparent cleavage is the truè Tolstoi, just as for Rolland the man who struggles is the only man truly alive. Whilst Michelangelo believes himself to see a divine life above this human life, Tolstoi sees a genuine life behind the casual life of everyday, and to attain to the former he destroys the latter. The most celebrated artist in Europe throws away his art, like a knight throwing away his sword, to walk bare-headed along the penitent's path; he breaks family ties; he undermines his days and his nights with fanatical questions. Down to the last hour of his life he is at war with himself, as he seeks to make peace with his conscience; he is a fighter for the invisible, that invisible which means so much more than happiness, joy, and God; a fighter for the ultimate truth which he can share with no one.

This heroic struggle is waged, like that of Beethoven and Michelangelo, in terrible isolation, is waged like theirs in airless spaces. His wife, his children, his friends, his enemies, all fail to understand him. They consider him a Don Quixote, for they cannot see the opponent with whom he wrestles, the opponent who is himself. None can bring him solace; none can help him. Merely that he may die at peace, he has to flee

from his comfortable home on a bitter night in winter, to perish like a beggar by the wayside. Always at this supreme altitude to which mankind looks yearningly up, the atmosphere is ice-bound and lonely. Those who create for all must do so in solitude, each one of them a savior nailed to the cross, each suffering for a different faith; and yet suffering every one of them for all mankind.

CHAPTER VI

THE UNWRITTEN BIOGRAPHIES

ON the cover of the *Beethoven,* the first of Rolland's biographies, was an announcement of the lives of a number of heroic personalities. There was to be a life of Mazzini. With the aid of Malwida von Meysenbug, who had known the great revolutionist, Rolland had been collecting relevant documents for years. Among other biographies, there was to be one of General Hoche; and one of the great utopist, Thomas Paine. The original scheme embraced lives of many other spiritual heroes. Not a few of the biographies had already been outlined in the author's mind. Above all, in his riper years, Rolland designed at one time to give a picture of the restful world in which Goethe moved; to pay a tribute of thanks to Shakespeare; and to discharge the debt of friendship to one little known to the world, Malwida von Meysenbug.

These "vies des hommes illustres" have remained unwritten. The only biographical studies produced by Rolland during the ensuing years were those of a more scientific character, dealing with Handel and Millet, and the minor biographies of Hugo Wolf and Berlioz. Thus the third grandly conceived creative cycle like-

wise remained a fragment. But on this occasion the discontinuance of the work was not due to the disfavor of circumstances or to the indifference of readers. The abandonment of the scheme was the outcome of the author's own moral conviction. The historian in him had come to recognize that his most intimate energy, truth, was not reconcilable with the desire to create enthusiasm. In the single instance of Beethoven it had been possible to preserve historical accuracy and still to bring solace, for here the soul had been lifted towards joy by the very spirit of music. In Michelangelo's case a certain strain had been felt in the attempt to present as a conqueror of the world this man who was a prey to inborn melancholy, who, working in stone, was himself petrified to marble. Even Tolstoi was a herald rather of true life, than of rich and enthralling life, life worth living. When, finally, Rolland came to deal with Mazzini, he realized, as he sympathetically studied the embitterment of the forgotten patriot in old age, that it would either be necessary to falsify the record if edification were to be derived from this biography, or else, by recording the truth, to provide readers with further grounds for depression. He recognized that there are truths which love for mankind must lead us to conceal. Of a sudden he has personal experience of the conflict, of the tragical dilemma, which Tolstoi had had to face. He became aware of "the dissonance between his pitiless vision which enabled him to see all the horror of reality, and his compassionate heart which made him desire to veil these horrors and retain his readers' affection. We have

all experienced this tragical struggle. How often has the artist been filled with distress when contemplating a truth which he will have to describe. For this same healthy and virile truth, which for some is as natural as the air they breathe, is absolutely insupportable to others, who are weak through the tenor of their lives or through simple kindliness. What are we to do? Are we to suppress this deadly truth, or to utter it unsparingly? Continually does the dilemma force itself upon us, Truth or Love?"

Such was the overwhelming experience which came upon Rolland in mid career. It is impossible to write the history of great men, both as historian recording truth, and as lover of mankind who desires to lead his fellows upwards towards perfection. To Rolland, the enthusiast, the historian's function now seemed the less important of the two. For what is the truth about a man? "It is so difficult to describe a personality. Every man is a riddle, not for others alone, but for himself likewise. It is presumptuous to claim a knowledge of one who is not known even by himself. Yet we cannot help passing judgments on character, for to do so is a necessary part of life. Not one of those we believe ourselves to know, not one of our friends, not one of those we love, is as we see him. In many cases he is utterly different from our picture. We wander amid the phantoms we create. Yet we have to judge; we have to act."

Justice to himself, justice to those whose names he honored, veneration for the truth, compassion for his

fellows—all these combined to arrest his half-completed design. Rolland laid aside the heroic biographies. He would rather be silent than surrender to that cowardly idealism which touches up lest it should have to repudiate. He halted on a road which he had recognized to be impassable, but he did not forget his aim "to defend greatness on earth." Since these historic figures would not serve the ends of his faith, his faith created a figure for itself. Since history refused to supply him with the image of the consoler, he had recourse to art, fashioning amid contemporary life the hero he desired, creating out of truth and fiction his own and our own Jean Christophe.

PART IV

JEAN CHRISTOPHE

> It is really astonishing to note how the epic and the philosophical are here compressed within the same work. In respect of form we have so beautiful a whole. Reaching outwards, the work touches the infinite, touches both art and life. In fact we may say of this romance, that it is in no respects limited except in point of æsthetic form, and that where it transcends form it comes into contact with the infinite. I might compare it to a beautiful island lying between two seas.
>
> SCHILLER TO GOETHE CONCERNING *Wilhelm Meister*.
>
> October 19, 1796.

CHAPTER I

SANCTUS CHRISTOPHORUS

UPON the last page of his great work, Rolland relates the well-known legend of St. Christopher. The ferryman was roused at night by a little boy who wished to be carried across the stream. With a smile the good-natured giant shouldered the light burden. But as he strode through the water the weight he was carrying grew heavy and heavier, until he felt he was about to sink in the river. Mustering all his strength, he continued on his way. When he reached the other shore, gasping for breath, the man recognized that he had been carrying the entire meaning of the world. Hence his name, Christophorus.

Rolland has known this long night of labor. When he assumed the fateful burden, when he took the work upon his shoulders, he meant to recount but a single life. As he proceeded, what had been light grew heavy. He found that he was carrying the whole destiny of his generation, the meaning of the entire world, the message of love, the primal secret of creation. We who saw him making his way alone through the night, without recognition, without helpers, without a word of cheer, without a friendly light winking at him from the further shore,

imagined that he must succumb. From the hither bank the unbelievers followed him with shouts of scornful laughter. But he pressed manfully forward during these ten years, what time the stream of life swirled ever more fiercely around him; and he fought his way in the end to the unknown shore of completion. With bowed back, but with the radiance in his eyes undimmed, did he finish fording the river. Long and heavy night of travail, wherein he walked alone! Dear burden, which he carried for the sake of those who are to come afterwards, bearing it from our shore to the still untrodden shore of the new world. Now the crossing had been safely made. When the good ferryman raised his eyes, the night seemed to be over, the darkness vanished. Eastward the heaven was all aglow. Joyfully he welcomed the dawn of the coming day towards which he had carried this emblem of the day that was done.

Yet what was reddening there was naught but the bloody cloud-bank of war, the flame of burning Europe, the flame that was to consume the spirit of the elder world. Nothing remained of our sacred heritage beyond this, that faith had bravely struggled from the shore of yesterday to reach our again distracted world. The conflagration has burned itself out; once more night has lowered. But our thanks speed towards you, ferryman, pious wanderer, for the path you have trodden through the darkness. We thank you for your labors, which have brought the world a message of hope. For the sake of us all have you marched on through the

murky night. The flame of hatred will yet be extinguished; the spirit of friendship will again unite people with people. It will dawn, that new day.

CHAPTER II

RESURRECTION

ROMAIN ROLLAND was now in his fortieth year. His life seemed to be a field of ruins. The banners of his faith, the manifestoes to the French people and to humanity, had been torn to rags by the storms of reality. His dramas had been buried on a single evening. The figures of the heroes, which were designed to form a stately series of historic bronzes, stood neglected, three as isolated statues, while the others were but rough-casts prematurely destroyed.

Yet the sacred flame still burned within him. With heroic determination he threw the figures once more into the fiery crucible of his heart, melting the metal that it might be recast in new forms. Since his feeling for truth made it impossible for him to find the supreme consoler in any actual historical figure, he resolved to create a genius of the spirit, who should combine and typify what the great ones of all times had suffered, a hero who should not belong to one nation but to all peoples. No longer confining himself to historical truth, he looked for a higher harmony in the new configuration of truth and fiction. He fashioned the epic of an imaginary personality.

As if by miracle, all that he had lost was now regained. The vanished fancies of his school days, the boy artist's dream of a great artist who should stand erect against the world, the young man's vision on the Janiculum, surged up anew. The figures of his dramas, Aërt and the Girondists, arose in a fresh embodiment; the images of Beethoven, Michelangelo, and Tolstoi, emerging from the rigidity of history, took their places among our contemporaries. Rolland's disillusionments had been but precious experiences; his trials, but a ladder to higher things. What had seemed like an end became the true beginning, that of his masterwork, *Jean Christophe.*

CHAPTER III

THE ORIGIN OF THE WORK

JEAN CHRISTOPHE had long been beckoning the poet from a distance. The first message had come to the lad in the Normal School. During those years, young Rolland had planned the writing of a romance, the history of a single-hearted artist shattered on the rocks of the world. The outlines were vague; the only definite idea was that the hero was to be a musician whose contemporaries failed to understand him. The dream came to nothing, like so many of the dreams of youth.

But the vision returned in Rome, when Rolland's poetic fervor, long pent by the restrictions of school life, broke forth with elemental energy. Malwida von Meysenbug had told him much concerning the tragical struggles of her intimate friends Wagner and Nietzsche. Rolland came to realize that heroic figures, though they may be obscured by the tumult and dust of the hour, belong in truth to every age. Involuntarily he learned to associate the unhappy experiences of these recent heroes with those of the figures in his vision. In Parsifal, the guileless Fool, by pity enlightened, he recognized an emblem of the artist whose intuition guides him

Romain Rolland at the time of writing *Jean Christophe*

through the world, and who comes to know the world through experience. One evening, as Rolland walked on the Janiculum, the vision of Jean Christophe grew suddenly clear. His hero was to be a pure-hearted musician, a German, visiting other lands, finding his god in Life; a free mortal spirit, inspired with a faith in greatness, and with faith even in mankind, though mankind rejected him.

The happy days of freedom in Rome were followed by many years of arduous labor, during which the duties of daily life thrust the image into the background. Rolland had for a season become a man of action, and had no time for dreams. Then came new experiences to reawaken the slumbering vision. I have told of his visit to Beethoven's house in Bonn, and of the effect produced on his mind by the realization of the tragedy of the great composer's life. This gave a new direction to his thoughts. His hero was to be a Beethoven redivivus, a German, a lonely fighter, but a conqueror. Whereas the immature youth had idealized defeat, imagining that to fail was to be vanquished, the man of riper years perceived that true heroism lay in this, "to know life, and yet to love it." Thus splendidly did the new horizon open as setting for the long cherished figure, the dawn of eternal victory in our earthly struggle. The conception of Jean Christophe was complete.

Rolland now knew his hero. But it was necessary that he should learn to describe that hero's counterpart, that hero's eternal enemy, life, reality. Whoever wishes to delineate a combat fairly, must know both champions.

Rolland became intimately acquainted with Jean Christophe's opponent through the experiences of these years of disillusionment, through his study of literature, through his realization of the falseness of society and of the indifference of the crowd. It was necessary for him to pass through the purgatorial fires of the years in Paris before he could begin the work of description. At twenty, Rolland had made acquaintance only with himself, and was therefore competent to describe no more than his own heroic will to purity. At thirty he had become able to depict likewise the forces of resistance. All the hopes he had cherished and all the disappointments he had suffered jostled one another in the channel of this new existence. The innumerable newspaper cuttings, collected for years, almost without a definite aim, magically arranged themselves as material for the growing work. Personal griefs were seen to have been valuable experience; the boy's dream swelled to the proportions of a life history.

During the year 1895 the broad lines were finished. As prelude, Rolland gave a few scenes from Jean Christophe's youth. During 1897, in a remote Swiss hamlet, the first chapters were penned, those in which the music begins as it were spontaneously. Then (so definitely was the whole design now shaping itself in his mind) he wrote some of the chapters for the fifth and ninth volumes. Like a musical composer, Rolland followed up particular themes as his mood directed, themes which his artistry was to weave harmoniously into the great symphony. Order came from within, and was

not imposed from without. The work was not done in any strictly serial succession. The chapters seemed to come into being as chance might direct. Often they were inspired by the landscape, and were colored by outward events. Seippel, for instance, shows that Jean Christophe's flight into the forest was suggested by the last journey of Rolland's beloved teacher Tolstoi. With appropriate symbolism, this work of European scope was composed in various parts of Europe; the opening scenes, as we have said, in a Swiss hamlet; *L'adolescent* in Zurich and by the shores of Lake Zug; much in Paris; much in Italy; *Antoinette* in Oxford; while, after nearly fifteen years' labor, the work was completed in Baveno.

In February, 1902, the first volume, *L'aube*, was published in "*Les cahiers de la quinzaine*," and the last serial number was issued on October 20, 1912. When the fifth serial issue, *La foire sur la place*, appeared, a publisher, Ollendorff, was found willing to produce the whole romance in book form. Before the French original was completed, English, Spanish, and German translations were in course of publication, and Seippel's valuable biography had also appeared. Thus when the work was crowned by the Academy in 1913, its reputation was already established. In the fifth decade of his life, Rolland had at length become famous. His messenger Jean Christophe was a living contemporary figure, on pilgrimage through the world.

CHAPTER IV

THE WORK WITHOUT A FORMULA

WHAT, then, is *Jean Christophe?* Can it be properly spoken of as a romance? This book, which is as comprehensive as the world, an orbis pictus of our generation, cannot be described by a single all-embracing term. Rolland once said: "Any work which can be circumscribed by a definition is a dead work." Most applicable to *Jean Christophe* is the refusal to permit so living a creation to be hidebound by the restrictions of a name. *Jean Christophe* is an attempt to create a totality, to write a book that is universal and encyclopedic, not merely narrative; a book which continually returns to the central problem of the world-all. It combines insight into the soul with an outlook into the age. It is the portrait of an entire generation, and simultaneously it is the biography of an imaginary individual. Grautoff has termed it "a cross-section of our society"; but it is likewise the religious confession of its author. It is critical, but at the same time productive; at once a criticism of reality, and a creative analysis of the unconscious; it is a symphony in words, and a fresco of contemporary ideas. It is an ode to solitude, and likewise an Eroica of the great

European fellowship. But whatever definition we attempt, can deal with a part only, for the whole eludes definition. In the field of literary endeavor, the nature of a moral or ethical act cannot be precisely specified. Rolland's sculptural energies enable him to shape the inner humanity of what he is describing; his idealism is a force that strengthens faith, a tonic of vitality. His *Jean Christophe* is an attempt towards justice, an attempt to understand life. It is also an attempt towards faith, an attempt to love life. These coalesce in his moral demand (the only one he has ever formulated for the free human being), "to know life, and yet to love it."

The essential aim of the book is explained by its hero when he refers to the disparateness of contemporary life, to the manner in which its art has been severed into a thousand fragments. "The Europe of to-day no longer possesses a common book; it has no poem, no prayer, no act of faith which is the common heritage of all. This lack is fatal to the art of our time. There is no one who has written for all; no one who has fought for all." Rolland hoped to remedy the evil. He wished to write for all nations, and not for his fatherland alone. Not artists and men of letters merely, but all who are eager to learn about life and about their own age, were to be supplied with a picture of the environment in which they were living. Jean Christophe gives expression to his creator's will, saying: "Display everyday life to everyday people—the life that is deeper and wider than the ocean. The least among us bears infinity within him . . . Describe the simple life of one of these simple

men; . . . describe it simply, as it actually happens. Do not trouble about phrasing; do not dissipate your energies, as do so many contemporary writers, in straining for artistic effects. You wish to speak to the many, and you must therefore speak their language. . . . Throw yourself into what you create; think your own thoughts; feel your own feelings. Let your heart set the rhythm to the words. Style is soul."

Jean Christophe was designed to be, and actually is, a work of life, and not a work of art; it was to be, and is, a book as comprehensive as humanity; for "l'art est la vie domptée"; art is life broken in. The book differs from the majority of the imaginative writings of our day in that it does not make the erotic problem its central feature. But it has no central feature. It attempts to comprehend all problems, all those which are a part of reality, to contemplate them from within, "from the spectrum of an individual" as Grautoff expresses it. The center is the inner life of the individual human being. The primary motif of the romance is to expound how this individual sees life, or rather, how he learns to see it. The book may therefore be described as an educational romance in the sense in which that term applies to *Wilhelm Meister*. The educational romance aims at showing how, in years of apprenticeship and years of travel, a human being makes acquaintance with the lives of others, and thus acquires mastery over his own life; how experience teaches him to transform into individual views the concepts he has had transmitted to him by others, many of which are erroneous; how he be-

comes enabled to transmute the world so that it ceases to be an outward phenomenon and becomes an inward reality. The educational romance traces the change from curiosity to knowledge, from emotional prejudice to justice.

But this educational romance is simultaneously a historical romance, a "comédie humaine" in Balzac's sense; an "histoire contemporaine" in Anatole France's sense; and in many respects also it is a political romance. But Rolland, with his more catholic method of treatment, does not merely depict the history of his generation, but discusses the cultural history of the age, exhibiting the radiations of the time spirit, concerning himself with poesy and with socialism, with music and with the fine arts, with the woman's question and with racial problems. Jean Christophe the man is a whole man, and *Jean Christophe* the book embraces all that is human in the spiritual cosmos. This romance ignores no questions; it seeks to overcome all obstacles; it has a universal life, beyond the frontiers of nations, occupations, and creeds.

It is a romance of art, a romance of music, as well as a historical romance. Its hero is not a saunterer through life, like the heroes of Goethe, Novalis, and Stendhal, but a creator. As with Gottfried Keller's *Der grüne Heinrich*, in this book the path through the externals of life leads simultaneously to the inner world, to art, to completion. The birth of music, the growth of genius, is individually and yet typically presented. In his portrayal of experience, the author does not merely

aim at giving an analysis of the world; he desires also to expound the mystery of creation, the primal secret of life.

Furthermore, the book furnishes an outlook on the universe, thus becoming a philosophic, a religious romance. The struggle for the totality of life, signifies for Rolland the struggle to understand its significance and origin, the struggle for God, for one's own personal God. The rhythm of the individual existence is in search of an ultimate harmony between itself and the rhythm of the universal existence. From this earthly sphere, the Idea flows back into the infinite in an exultant canticle.

Such a wealth of design and execution was unprecedented. In one work alone, Tolstoi's *War and Peace,* had Rolland encountered a similar conjuncture of a historical picture of the world with a process of inner purification and a state of religious ecstasy. Here only had he discerned the like passionate sense of responsibility towards truth. But Rolland diverged from this splendid example by placing his tragedy in the temporal environment of the life of to-day, instead of amid the wars of Napoleonic times; and by endowing his hero with the heroism, not of arms, but of the invisible struggles which the artist is constrained to fight. Here, as always, the most human of artists was his model, the man to whom art was not an end in itself, but was ever subordinate to an ethical purpose. In accordance with the spirit of Tolstoi's teaching, *Jean Christophe* was not to be a literary work, but a deed. For this reason, Rolland's great sym-

phony cannot be subjected to the restrictions of a convenient formula. The book ignores all the ordinary canons, and is none the less a characteristic product of its time. Standing outside literature, it is an overwhelmingly powerful literary manifestation. Often enough it ignores the rules of art, and is yet a most perfect expression of art. It is not a book, but a message; it is not a history, but is nevertheless a record of our time. More than a book, it is the daily miracle of revelation of a man who lives the truth, whose whole life is truth.

CHAPTER V

KEY TO THE CHARACTERS

AS a romance, *Jean Christophe* has no prototype in literature; but the characters in the book have prototypes in real life. Rolland the historian does not hesitate to borrow some of the lineaments of his heroes from the biographies of great men. In many cases, too, the figures he portrays recall personalities in contemporary life. In a manner peculiar to himself, by a process of which he was the originator, he combines the imaginative with the historical, fusing individual qualities in a new synthesis. His delineations tend to be mosaics, rather than entirely new imaginative creations. In ultimate analysis, his method of literary composition invariably recalls the work of a musical composer; he paraphrases thematic reminiscences, without imitating too closely. The reader of *Jean Christophe* often fancies that, as in a key-novel, he has recognized some public personality; but ere long he finds that the characteristics of another figure intrude. Thus each portrait is freshly constructed out of a hundred diverse elements.

Jean Christophe seems at first to be Beethoven. Seippel has aptly described *La vie de Beethoven* as a preface

to *Jean Christophe.* In truth the opening volumes of the novel show us a Jean Christophe whose image is modeled after that of the great master. But it becomes plain in due course that we are being shown something more than one single musician, that Jean Christophe is the quintessence of all great musicians. The figures in the pantheon of musical history are presented in a composite portrait; or, to use a musical analogy, Beethoven, the master musician, is the root of the chord. Jean Christophe grew up in the Rhineland, Beethoven's home; Jean Christophe, like Beethoven, had Flemish blood in his veins; his mother, too, was of peasant origin, his father a drunkard. Nevertheless, Jean Christophe exhibits numerous traits proper to Friedemann Bach, son of Johann Sebastian Bach. Again, the letter which young Beethoven redivivus is made to write to the grand duke is modeled on the historical document; the episode of his acquaintanceship with Frau von Kerich recalls Beethoven and Frau von Breuning. But many incidents, like the scene in the castle, remind the reader of Mozart's youth; and Mozart's little love episode with Rose Cannabich is transferred to the life of Jean Christophe. The older Jean Christophe grows, the less does his personality recall that of Beethoven. In external characteristics he grows rather to resemble Gluck and Handel. Of the latter, Rolland writes elsewhere that "his formidable bluntness alarmed every one." Word for word we can apply to Jean Christophe, Rolland's description of Handel: "He was independent and irritable, and could never adapt himself to the conventions

of social life. He insisted on calling a spade a spade, and twenty times a day he aroused annoyance in all who had to associate with him." The life history of Wagner had much influence upon the delineation of Jean Christophe. The rebellious flight to Paris, a flight originating, as Nietzsche phrases it, "from the depths of instinct"; the hack-work done for minor publishers; the sordid details of daily life—all these things have been transposed almost verbatim into *Jean Christophe* from Wagner's autobiographical sketches *Ein deutscher Musiker in Paris.*

Ernst Decsey's life of Hugo Wolf was, however, decisive in its influence upon the configuration of the leading character in Rolland's book, upon the almost violent departure from the picture of Beethoven. Not merely do we find individual incidents taken from Decsey's book, such as the hatred for Brahms, the visit paid to Hassler (Wagner), the musical criticism published in *"Dionysos"* (*"Wiener Salonblatt"*), the tragi-comedy of the unsuccessful overture to *Penthesilea,* and the memorable visit to Professor Schulz (Emil Kaufmann). Furthermore, Wolf's whole character, his method of musical creation, is transplanted into the soul of Jean Christophe. His primitive force of production, the volcanic eruptions flooding the world with melody, shooting forth into eternity four songs in the space of a day, with subsequent months of inactivity, the brusque transition from the joyful activity of creation to the gloomy brooding of inertia—this form of genius which was native to Hugo Wolf becomes part of the tragical equipment of Jean

Christophe. Whereas his physical characteristics remind us of Handel, Beethoven, and Gluck, his mental type is assimilated rather in its convulsive energy to that of the great song-writer. With this difference, that to Jean Christophe, in his more brilliant hours, there is superadded the cheerful serenity, the childlike joy, of Schubert. He has a dual nature. Jean Christophe is the classical type and the modern type of musician combined into a single personality, so that he contains even many of the characteristics of Gustav Mahler and César Frank. He is not an individual musician, the figure of one living in a particular generation; he is the sublimation of music as a whole.

Nevertheless, in Jean Christophe's life we find incidents deriving from the adventures of those who were not musicians. From Goethe's *Wahrheit und Dichtung* comes the encounter with the French players; I have already said that the story of Tolstoi's last days was represented in Jean Christophe's flight into the forest (though in this latter case, from the figure of a benighted traveler, Nietzsche's countenance glances at us for a moment). Grazia typifies the well-beloved who never dies; Antoinette is a picture of Renan's sister Henriette; Françoise Oudon, the actress, recalls Eleanora Duse, but in certain respects she reminds us of Suzanne Deprès. Emmanuel contains, in addition to traits that are purely imaginary, lineaments that are drawn respectively from Charles Louis Philippe and Charles Péguy; among the minor figures, lightly sketched, we seem to see Debussy, Verhaeren, and Moreas. When *La foire sur la place*

was published, the figures of Roussin the deputy, Lévy-Coeur, the critic, Gamache the newspaper proprietor, and Hecht the music seller, hurt the feelings of not a few persons against whom no shafts had been aimed by Rolland. The portraits had been painted from studies of the commonplace, and typified the incessantly recurring mediocrities which are eternally real no less than are figures of exquisite rarity.

One portrait, however, that of Olivier, would seem to have been purely fictive. For this very reason, Olivier is felt to be the most living of all the characters, precisely because we cannot but feel that in many respects we have before us the artist's own picture, displaying not so much the circumstantial destiny as the human essence of Romain Rolland. Like the classical painters, he has, almost unmarked, introduced himself slightly disguised amid the historical scenario. The description is that of his own figure, slender, refined, slightly stooping; here we see his own energy, inwardly directed, and consuming itself in idealism; Rolland's enthusiasm is displayed in Olivier's lucid sense of justice, in his resignation as far as his personal lot is concerned, though he never resigns himself to the abandonment of his cause. It is true that in the novel this gentle spirit, the pupil of Tolstoi and Renan, leaves the field of action to his friend, and vanishes, the symbol of a past world. But Jean Christophe was merely a dream, the longing for energy sometimes felt by the man of gentle disposition. Olivier-Rolland limns this dream of his youth, designing upon his literary canvas the picture of his own life.

CHAPTER VI

A HEROIC SYMPHONY

AN abundance of figures and events, an impressive multiplicity of contrasts, are united by a single element, music. In *Jean Christophe*, music is the form as well as the content. For the sake of simplicity we have to call the work a romance or a novel. But nowhere can it be said to attach to the epic tradition of any previous writers of romance: whether to that of Balzac, Zola, and Flaubert, who aimed at analyzing society into its chemical elements; or to that of Goethe, Gottfried Keller, and Stendhal, who sought to secure a crystallization of the soul. Rolland is neither a narrator, nor what may be termed a poetical romancer; he is a musician who weaves everything into harmony. In ultimate analysis, *Jean Christophe* is a symphony born out of the spirit of music, just as in Nietzsche's view classical tragedy was born out of that spirit; its laws are not those of the narrative, of the lecture, but those of controlled emotion. Rolland is a musician, not an epic poet.

Even qua narrator, Rolland does not possess what we term style. He does not write a classical French; he has no stable architechtonic in his sentences, no definite

rhythm, no typical hue in his wording, no diction peculiar to himself. His personality does not obtrude itself, since he does not form the matter but is formed thereby. He possesses an inspired power of adaptation to the rhythm of the events he is describing, to the mood of the situation. The writer's mind acts as a resonator. In the opening lines the tempo is set. Then the rhythm surges on through the scene, carrying with it the episodes, which often seem like individual brief poems each sustained by its own melody—songs and airs which appear and pass, rapidly giving place to new movements. Some of the preludes in *Jean Christophe* are examples of pure song-craft, delicate arabesques and capriccios, islands of tone amid the roaring sea; then come other moods, gloomy ballads, nocturnes breathing elemental energy and sadness. When Rolland's writing is the outcome of musical inspiration, he shows himself one of the masters of language. At times, however, he speaks to us as historian, as critical student of the age. Then the splendor fades. Such historical and critical passages are like the periods of cold recitative in musical drama, periods which are requisite in order to give continuity to the story, and which thus fulfill an intellectual need, however much our aroused feelings may make us regret their interpolation. The ancient conflict between the musician and the historian persists unreconciled in Rolland's work.

Only through the spirit of music can the architectonic of *Jean Christophe* be understood. However plastic the elaboration of the characters, their effective force is dis-

played solely in so far as they are thematically interwoven into the resounding tide of life's modulations. The essential matter is always the rhythm which these characters emit, and which issues most powerfully of all from Jean Christophe, the master of music. The structure, the inner architectural conception of the work, cannot be understood by those who merely contemplate its obvious subdivision into ten volumes. This is dictated by the exigencies of book production. The essential caesuras are those between the lesser sections, each of which is written in a different key. Only a trained musician, one familiar with the great symphonies, can follow in detail the way in which the epic poem *Jean Christophe* is constructed as a symphony, an Eroica; only a musician can realize how in this work the most comprehensive type of musical composition is transposed into the world of speech.

Let the reader recall the chorale-like undertone, the booming note of the Rhine. We seem to be listening to some primal energy, to the stream of life in its roaring progress through eternity. A little melody rises above the general roar. Jean Christophe, the child, has been born out of the great music of the universe, to fuse in turn with the endless stream of sound. The first figures make a dramatic entry; the mystical chorale gradually subsides; the mortal drama of childhood begins. By degrees the stage is filled with personalities, with melodies; voices answer the lisping syllables of Jean Christophe; until, finally, the virile tones of Jean Christophe and the gentler voice of Olivier come to dominate the

theme. Meanwhile, all the forms of life and music are unfolded in concords and discords. Thus we have the tragical outbreaks of a melancholy like that of Beethoven; fugues upon the themes of art; vigorous dance scenes, as in *Le buisson ardent;* odes to the infinite and songs to nature, pure like those of Schubert. Wonderful is the interconnection of the whole, and marvelous is the way in which the tide of sound ebbs once more. The dramatic tumult subsides; the last discords are resolved into the great harmony. In the final scene, the opening melody recurs, to the accompaniment of invisible choirs; the roaring river flows out into the limitless sea.

Thus *Jean Christophe,* the Eroica, ends in a chorale to the infinite powers of life, ends in the undying ocean of music. Rolland wished to convey the notion of these eternal forces of life symbolically through the imagery of the element which for us mortals brings us into closest contact with the infinite; he wished to typify these forces in the art which is timeless, which is free, which knows nothing of national limitations, which is eternal. Thus music is at once the form and the content of the work, "simultaneously its kernel and its shell," as Goethe said of nature. Nature is ever the law of laws for art.

CHAPTER VII

THE ENIGMA OF CREATIVE WORK

JEAN CHRISTOPHE took the form of a book of life rather than that of a romance of art, for Rolland does not make a specific distinction between poietic types of men and those devoid of creative genius, but inclines rather to see in the artist the most human among men. Just as for Goethe, true life was identical with activity; so for Rolland, true life is identical with production. One who shuts himself away, who has no surplus being, who fails to radiate energy that shall flow beyond the narrow limits of his individuality to become part of the vital energy of the future, is doubtless still a human being, but is not genuinely alive. There may occur a death of the soul before the death of the body, just as there is a life that outlasts one's own life. The real boundary across which we pass from life to extinction is not constituted by physical death but the cessation of effective influence. Creation alone is life. "There is only one delight, that of creation. Other joys are but shadows, alien to the world though they hover over the world. Desire is creative desire; for love, for genius, for action. One and all are born out of ardor. It matters not whether we are creating

in the sphere of the body or in the sphere of the spirit. Ever, in creation, we are seeking to escape from the prison of the body, to throw ourselves into the storm of life, to be as gods. To create is to slay death."

Creation, therefore, is the meaning of life, its secret, its innermost kernel. While Rolland almost always chooses an artist for his hero, he does not make this choice in the arrogance of the romance writer who likes to contrast the melancholy genius with the dull crowd. His aim is to draw nearer to the primal problems of existence. In the work of art, transcending time and space, the eternal miracle of generation out of nothing (or out of the all) is made manifest to the senses, while simultaneously its mystery is made plain to the intelligence. For Rolland, artistic creation is the problem of problems precisely because the artist is the most human of men. Everywhere Rolland threads his way through the obscure labyrinth of creative work, that he may draw near to the burning moment of spiritual receptivity, to the painful act of giving birth. He watches Michelangelo shaping pain in stone; Beethoven bursting forth in melody; Tolstoi listening to the heart-beat of doubt in his own laden breast. To each, Jacob's angel is revealed in a different form, but for all alike the esctatic force of the divine struggle continues to burn. Throughout the years, Rolland's sole endeavor has been to discover this ultimate type of artist, this primitive element of creation, much as Goethe was in search of the archetypal plant. Rolland wishes to discover the essential creator, the essential act of creation, for he knows that

in this mystery are comprised the root and the blossoms of the whole of life's enigma.

As historian he had depicted the birth of art in humanity. Now, as poet, he was approaching the same problem in a different form, and was endeavoring to depict the birth of art in one individual. In his *Histoire de l'opêra avant Lully et Scarlatti*, and in his *Musiciens d'autrefois*, he had shown how music, "blossoming throughout the ages," begins to form its buds; and how, grafted upon different racial stems and upon different periods, it grows in new forms. But here begins the mystery of creation. Every beginning is wrapped in obscurity; and since the path of all mankind is symbolically indicated in each individual, the mystery recurs in each individual's experience. Rolland is aware that the intellect can never unravel this ultimate mystery. He does not share the views of the monists, for whom creation has become trivialized to a mechanical effect which they would explain by talking of primitive gases and by similar verbiage. He knows that nature is modest, and that in her secret hours of generation she would fain elude observation; he knows that we are unable to watch her at work in those moments when crystal is joining to crystal, and when flowers are springing out of the buds. Nothing does she hide more jealously than her inmost magic, everlasting procreation, the very secret of infinity.

Creation, therefore, the life of life, is for Rolland a mystic power, far transcending human will and human intelligence. In every soul there lives, side by side with

the conscious individuality, a stranger as guest. "Man's chief endeavor since he became man has been to build up dams that shall control this inner sea by the powers of reason and religion. But when a storm comes (and those most plenteously endowed are peculiarly subject to such storms), the elemental powers are set free." Hot waves flood the soul, streaming forth out of the unconscious; not out of the will, but against the will; out of a super-will. This "dualism of the soul and its daimon" cannot be overcome by the clear light of reason. The energy of the creative spirit surges from the depths of the blood, often from parents and remoter progenitors, not entering through the doors and windows of the normal waking consciousness, but permeating the whole being as atmospheric spirits may be conceived to do. Of a sudden the artist is seized as by intoxication, inspired by a will independent of the will, subjected to the power "of the ineffable riddle of the world and of life," as Goethe terms the daimonic. The divine breaks upon him like a hurricane; or opens before him like an abyss, "dieu abime," into which he hurls himself unreflectingly. In Rolland's sense, we must not say that the true artist has his art, but that the art has the artist. Art is the hunter, the artist is the quarry; art is the victor, whereas the artist is happy in that he is again and again and forever the vanquished. Thus before creation we must have the creator. Genius is predestined. At work in the channels of the blood, while the senses still slumber, this power from without prepares the great magic for the child. Wonderful is Rol-

land's description of the way in which Jean Christophe's soul was already filled with music before he had heard the first notes. The daimon is there within the youthful breast, awaiting but a sign before stirring, before making himself known to the kindred spirit within the dual soul. When the boy, holding his grandfather's hand, enters the church and is greeted by an outburst of music from the organ, the genius within acclaims the work of the distant brother and the child is filled with joy. Again, driving in a carriage, and listening to the melodious rhythm of the horse's hoofs, his heart goes out in unconscious brotherhood to the kindred element. Then comes one of the most beautiful passages in the book, probably the most beautiful of those treating of music. The little Jean Christophe clambers on to the music stool in front of the black chest filled with magic, and for the first time thrusts his fingers into the unending thicket of concords and discords, where each note that he strikes seems to answer yes or no to the unconscious questions of the stranger's voice within him. Soon he learns to produce the tones he desires to hear. At first the airs had sought him out, but now he can seek them out. His soul which, thirsting for music, has long been eagerly drinking in its strains, now flows forth creatively over the barriers into the world.

This inborn daimon in the artist grows with the child, ripens with the man, and ages as the man grows old. Like a vampire it is nourished by all the experiences of its host, drinking his joys and his sorrows, gradually sucking up all the life into itself, so that for the creative

human being nothing more remains but the eternal thirst and the torment of creation. In Rolland's sense the artist does not will to create, but must create. For him, production is not (as Nordau and Nordau's congeners fancy in their simplicity) a morbid outgrowth, an abnormality of life, but the only true health; unproductivity is disease. Never has the torment of the lack of inspiration been more splendidly described than in *Jean Christophe.* The soul in such cases is like a parched land under a torrid sun, and its need is worse than death. No breath of wind brings coolness; everything withers; joy and energy fade; the will is utterly relaxed. Suddenly comes a storm out of the swiftly overcast heavens, the thunder of the burgeoning power, the lightning of inspiration; the stream wells up from inexhaustible springs, carrying the soul along with it in eternal desire; the artist has become the whole world, has become God, the creator of all the elements. Whatever he encounters, he sweeps along with him in his rush; "tout lui est prétexte à sa fécondité intarissable"; everything is material for his inexhaustible fertility. He transforms the whole of life into art; like Jean Christophe he transforms his death into a symphony.

In order to grasp life in its entirety, Rolland has endeavored to describe the profoundest mystery of life; to describe creation, the origin of the all, the development of art in an artist. He has furnished a vivid description of the tie between creation and life, which weaklings are so eager to avoid. Jean Christophe is simultaneously the working genius and the suffering man; he

suffers through creation, and creates through suffering. For the very reason that Rolland is himself a creator, the imaginary figure of Jean Christophe, the artist, is transcendently alive.

CHAPTER VIII

JEAN CHRISTOPHE

ART has many forms, but its highest form is always that which is most intimately akin to nature in its laws and its manifestations. True genius works elementally, works naturally, is wide as the world and manifold as mankind. It creates out of its own abundance, not out of weakness. Its perennial effect, therefore, is to create more strength, to glorify nature, and to raise life above its temporal confines into infinity.

Jean Christophe is inspired with such genius. His name is symbolical. Jean Christophe Krafft is himself energy (Kraft), the indefatigable energy that springs from peasant ancestry. It is the energy which is hurled into life like a projectile, the energy that forcibly overcomes every obstacle. Now, as long as we identify the concept of life with quiescent being, with inactive existence, with things as they are, this force of nature must be ever at war with life. For Rolland, however, life is not the quiescent, but the struggle against quiescence; it is creation, poiesis, the eternal, upward and onward impulse against the inertia of "the perpetual as-you-were." Among artists, one who is a fighter, an innovator, must

necessarily be such a genius. Around him stand other artists engaged in comparatively peaceful activities, the contemplators, the sage observers of that which is, the completers of the extant, the imperturbable organizers of accomplished facts. They, the heirs of the past, have repose; he, the precursor, has storm. It is his lot to transform life into a work of art; he cannot enjoy life as a work of art; first he must create life as he would have it, create its form, its tradition, its ideal, its truth, its god. Nothing for him is ready-made; he has eternally to begin. Life does not welcome him into a warm house, where he can forthwith make himself at home. For him, life is but plastic material for a new edifice, wherein those who come after will live. Such a man, therefore, knows nothing of repose. "Work unrestingly," says his god to him; "you must fight ceaselessly." Obedient to the injunction, from boyhood to the day of his death he follows this path, fighting without truce, the flaming sword of the will in his hand. Often he grows weary, wondering whether struggle must indeed be unending, asking himself with Job whether his days be not "like the days of an hireling." But soon, shaking off lethargy, he recognizes that "we cannot be truly alive while we continue to ask why we live; we must live life for its own sake." He knows that labor is its own reward. In an hour of illumination he sums up his destiny in the splendid phrase: "I do not seek peace; I seek life."

But struggle implies the use of force. Despite his natural kindliness of disposition, Jean Christophe is an

apostle of force. We discern in him something barbaric and elemental, the power of a storm or of a torrent which, obeying not its own will but the unknown laws of nature, rushes down from the heights into the lower levels of life. His outward aspect is that of a fighter. He is tall and massive, almost uncouth, with large hands and brawny arms. He has the sanguine temperament, and is liable to outbursts of turbulent passion. His footfall is heavy; his gait is awkward, though he knows nothing of fatigue. These characteristics derive from the crude energy of his peasant forefathers on the maternal side; their pristine strength gives him steadfastness in the most arduous crises of existence. "Well is it with him who amid the mishaps of life is sustained by the power of a sturdy stock, so that the feet of father and grandfathers may carry forward the son when he grows weary, so that the vigorous growth of more robust forebears may relift the crushed soul." The power of resilence against the oppression of existence is given by such physical energy. Still more helpful is Jean Christophe's trust in the future, his healthy and unyielding optimism, his invincible confidence in victory. "I have centuries to look forward to," he cries exultantly in an hour of disillusionment. "Hail to life! Hail to joy!" From the German race he inherits Siegfried's confidence in success, and for this reason he is ever a fighter. He knows, "le génie veut l'obstacle, l'obstacle fait le génie" —genius desires obstacles, for obstacles create genius.

Force, however, is always wilful. Young Jean Christophe, while his energies have not yet been spiritu-

ally enlightened, have not yet been ethically tamed, can see no one but himself. He is unjust towards others, deaf and blind to remonstrance, indifferent as to whether his actions may please or displease. Like a woodcutter, ax in hand, he hastes stormfully through the forest, striking right and left, simply to secure light and space for himself. He despises German art without understanding it, and scorns French art without knowing anything about it. He is endowed with "the marvelous impudence of opinionated youth"; that of the undergraduate who says, "the world did not exist till I created it." His strength has its fling in contentiousness; for only when struggling does he feel that he is himself, then only can he enjoy his passion for life.

These struggles of Jean Christophe continue throughout the years, for his maladroitness is no less conspicuous than his strength. He does not understand his opponents. He is slow to learn the lessons of life; and it is precisely because the lessons are learned so slowly, piece by piece, each stage besprinkled with blood and watered with tears, that the novel is so impressive and so full of help. Nothing comes easily to him; no ripe fruit ever falls into his hands. He is simple like Parsifal, naive, somewhat boisterous and provincial. Instead of rubbing off his angularities upon the grindstones of social life, he bruises himself by his clumsy movements. He is an intuitive genius, not a psychologist; he foresees nothing, but must endure all things before he can know. "He had not the hawklike glance of Frenchmen and Jews, who discern the most trifling characteristics of

all that they see. He silently absorbed everything he came in contact with, as a sponge absorbs. Not until days or hours had elapsed would he become fully aware of what had now become a part of himself." Nothing was real to him so long as it remained objective. To be of use, every experience must be, as it were, digested and worked up into his blood. He could not exchange ideas and concepts one for another as people exchange bank notes. After prolonged nausea, he was able to free himself from all the conventional lies and trivial notions which had been instilled into him in youth, and was then at length enabled to absorb fresh nutriment. Before he could know France, he had to strip away all her masks one after another; before he could reach Grazia, "the well-beloved who never dies," he had to make his way through less lofty adventures. Before he could discover himself and before he could discover his god, he had to live the whole of his life through. Not until he reaches the other shore does Christophorus recognize that his burden has been a message.

He knows that "it is good to suffer when one is strong," and he therefore loves to encounter hindrances. "Everything great is good, and the extremity of pain borders on enfranchisement. The only thing that crushes irremediably, the only thing that destroys the soul, is mediocrity of pain and joy." He gradually learns to recognize his enemy, his own impetuosity; he learns to be just; he begins to understand himself and the world. The nature of passion becomes clear to him. He realizes that the hostility he encounters is aimed, not at him

personally, but at the eternal powers goading him on; he learns to love his enemies because they have helped him to find himself, and because they march towards the same goal by other roads. The years of apprenticeship have come to an end. As Schiller admirably puts it in the above-quoted letter to Goethe: "Years of apprenticeship are a relative concept. They imply their correlative, which is mastery. The idea of mastery is presupposed to elucidate and ground the idea of apprenticeship." Jean Christophe, in riper years, begins to see that through all his transformations he has by degrees become more truly himself. Preconceptions have been cast aside; he has been freed from beliefs and illusions, freed from the prejudices of race and nationality. He is free and yet pious, now that he grasps the meaning of the path he has to tread. In the frank and noisy optimism of youth, he had exclaimed, "What is life? A tragedy. Hurrah!" Now, "transfiguré par la foi," this optimism has been transformed into a gentle, all-embracing wisdom. His freethinker's confessions runs: "To serve God and to love God, signifies to serve life and to love life." He hears the footsteps of coming generations. Even in those who are hostile to him he salutes the undying spirit of life. He sees his fame growing like a great cathedral, and feels it be to something remote from himself. He who was an aimless stormer, is now a leader; but his own goal does not become clear to him until the sonorous waves of death encompass him, and he floats away into the vast ocean of music, into eternal peace.

What makes Jean Christophe's struggle supremely heroic is that he aspires solely towards the greatest, towards life as a whole. This striving man has to upbuild everything for himself; his art, his freedom, his faith, his God, his truth. He has to fight himself free from everything which others have taught him; from all the fellowships of art, nationality, race, and creed. His ardor never wrestles for any personal end, for success or for pleasure. "Il n'y a aucun rapport entre la passion et le plaisir." Jean Christophe's loneliness makes this struggle tragical. It is not on his own behalf that he troubles to attain to truth, for he knows that every man has his own truth. When, nevertheless, he becomes a helper of mankind, this is not by words, but by his own essential nature, which exercises a marvelously harmonizing influence in virtue of his vigorous goodness. Whoever comes into contact with him—the imaginary personalities in the book, and no less the real human beings who read the book—is the better for having known him. The power through which he conquers is that of the life which we all share. And inasmuch as we love him, we grow enabled to cherish an ardent love for the world of mankind.

CHAPTER IX

OLIVIER

JEAN CHRISTOPHE is the portrait of an artist. But every form and every formula of art and the artist must necessarily be one-sided. Rolland, therefore, introduces to Christophe in mid career, "nel mezzo del cammin," a counterpart, a Frenchman as foil to the German, a hero of thought as contrast to the hero of action. Jean Christophe and Olivier are complementary figures, attracting one another in virtue of the law of polarity. "They were very different each from the other, and they loved one another on account of this difference, being of the same species"—the noblest. Olivier is the essence of spiritual France, just as Jean Christophe is the offspring of the best energies of Germany; they are ideals, alike fashioned in the form of the highest ideal; alternating like major and minor, they transpose the theme of art and life into the most wonderful variations.

In externals the contrast between them is marked, both in respect of physical characteristics and social origins. Olivier is slightly built, pale and delicate. Whereas Jean Christophe springs from working folk, Olivier derives from an old and somewhat effete bourgeois stock,

and despite all his ardor he has an aristocratic aloofness from vulgar things. His vitality does not come like that of his robust comrade from excess of bodily energy, from muscles and blood, but from nerves and brain, from will and passion. He is receptive rather than productive. "He was ivy, a gentle soul which must always love and be loved." Art is for him a refuge from reality, whereas Jean Christophe flings himself upon art to find in it life many times multiplied. In Schiller's sense of the terms, Olivier is the sentimental artist, whilst his German brother is the naive genius. Olivier represents the beauty of a civilization; he is symbolic of "la vaste culture et le génie psychologique de la France"; Jean Christophe is the very luxuriance of nature. The Frenchman represents contemplation; the German, action. The former reflects by many facets; the latter has the genius which shines by its own light. Olivier "transfers to the sphere of thought all the energies that he has drawn from action," producing ideas where Christophe radiates vitality, and wishing to improve, not the world, but himself. It suffices him to fight out within himself the eternal struggle of responsibility. He contemplates unmoved the play of secular forces, looking on with the skeptical smile of his teacher Renan, as one who knows in advance that the perpetual return of evil is inevitable, that nothing can avert the eternal victory of injustice and wrong. His love, therefore, goes out to humanity, the abstract idea, and not to actual men, the unsatisfactory realizations of that idea.

At first we incline to regard him as a weakling, as

timid and inactive. Such is the view taken at the outset by his forceful friend, who says almost angrily: "Are you incapable of feeling hatred?" Olivier answers with a smile: "I hate hatred. It is repulsive to me that I should struggle with people whom I despise." He does not enter into treaties with reality; his strength lies in isolation. No defeat can daunt him, and no victory can persuade him: he knows that force rules the world, but he refuses to recognize the victor. Jean Christophe, fired by Teutonic pagan wrath, rushes at obstacles and stamps them underfoot; Olivier knows that next day the weeds that have been trodden to the earth will spring up again. He does not love struggle for its own sake. When he avoids struggle, this is not because he fears defeat, but because victory is indifferent to him. A freethinker, he is in truth animated by the spirit of Christianity. "I should run the risk of disturbing my soul's peace, which is more precious to me than any victory. I refuse to hate. I desire to be just even to my enemies. Amid the storms of passion I wish to retain clarity of vision, that I may understand everything and love everything."

Jean Christophe soon comes to recognize that Olivier is his spiritual brother, learning that the heroism of thought is just as great as the heroism of action, that his friend's idealistic anarchism is no less courageous than his own primitive revolt. In this apparent weakling, he venerates a soul of steel. Nothing can shake Olivier, nothing can confuse his serene intelligence. Superior force is no argument against him. "He had an inde-

pendence of judgment which nothing could overcome. When he loved anything, he loved it in defiance of the world." Justice is the only pole towards which the needle of his will points unerringly; justice is his sole form of fanaticism. Like Aërt, his weaker prototype, he has "la faim de justice." Every injustice, even the injustices of a remote past, seem to him a disturbance of the world order. He belongs, therefore, to no party; he is unfailingly the advocate on behalf of all the unhappy and all the oppressed; his place is ever "with the vanquished"; he does not wish to help the masses socially, but to help individual souls, whereas Jean Christophe desires to conquer for all mankind every paradise of art and freedom. For Olivier there is but one true freedom, that which comes from within, the freedom which a man must win for himself. The illusion of the crowd, its eternal class struggles and national struggles for power, distress him, but do not arouse his sympathy. Standing quite alone, he maintains his mental poise when war between Germany and France is imminent, when all are shaken in their convictions, and when even Jean Christophe feels that he must return home to fight for his fatherland. "I love my country," says the Frenchman to his German brother. "I love it just as you love yours. But am I for this reason to betray my conscience, to kill my soul? This would signify the betrayal of my country. I belong to the army of the spirit, not to the army of force." But brute force takes its revenge upon the man who despises force, and he is killed in a chance medley. Only his ideals, which were

his true life, survive him, to renew for those of a later generation the mystic idealism of his faith.

Marvelously delineated is the answer made by the advocate of mental force to the advocate of physical force, by the genius of the spirit to the genius of action. The two heroes are profoundly united in their love for art, in their passion for freedom, in their need for spiritual purity. Each is "pious and free" in his own sense; they are brothers in that ultimate domain which Rolland finely terms "the music of the soul"—in goodness. But Jean Christophe's goodness is that of instinct; it is elemental, therefore, and liable to be interrupted by passionate relapses into hate. Olivier's goodness, on the other hand, is intellectual and wise, and is tinged merely at times by ironical skepticism. But it is this contrast between them, it is the fact that their aspirations towards goodness are complementary, which draws them together. Christophe's robust faith revives joy in life for the lonely Olivier. Christophe, in turn, learns justice from Olivier. The sage is uplifted by the strong, who is himself enlightened by the sage's clarity. This mutual exchange of benefits symbolizes the relationship between their nations. The friendship between the two individuals is designed to be the prototype of a spiritual alliance between the brother peoples. France and Germany are "the two pinions of the west." The European spirit is to soar freely above the blood-drenched fields of the past.

CHAPTER X

GRAZIA

JEAN CHRISTOPHE is creative action; Olivier is creative thought; a third form is requisite to complete the cycle of existence, that of Grazia, creative being, who secures fulfillment merely through her beauty and refulgence. In her case likewise the name is symbolic. Jean Christophe Krafft, the embodiment of virile energy, reëncounters, comparatively late in life, Grazia, who now embodies the calm beauty of womanhood. Thus his impetuous spirit is helped to realize the final harmony.

Hitherto, in his long march towards peace, Jean Christophe has encountered only fellow-soldiers and enemies. In Grazia he comes for the first time into contact with a human being who is free from nervous tension, with one characterized by that serene concord which in his music he has unconsciously been seeking for many years. Grazia is not a flaming personality from whom he himself catches fire. The warmth of her senses has long ere this been cooled, through a certain weariness of life, a gentle inertia. But in her, too, sounds that "music of the soul"; she too is inspired with that goodness which is needed to attract Jean Christophe's liking. She does

not incite him to further action. Already, owing to the many stresses of his life, the hair on his temples has been whitened. She leads him to repose, shows him "the smile of the Italian skies," where his unrest, tending as ever to recur, vanishes at length like a cloud in the evening air. The untamed amativeness which in the past has convulsed his whole being, the need for love which has flamed up with elemental force in *Le buisson ardent*, threatening to destroy his very existence, is clarified here to become the "suprasensual marriage" with Grazia, "the well-beloved who never dies." Through Olivier, Jean Christophe is made lucid; through Grazia, he is made gentle. Olivier reconciled him with the world; Grazia, with himself. Olivier had been Virgil, guiding him through purgatorial fires; Grazia is Beatrice, pointing towards the heaven of the great harmony. Never was there a nobler symbolization of the European triad; the restrained fierceness of Germany; the clarity of France; the gentle beauty of the Italian spirit. Jean Christophe's life melody is resolved in this triad; he has now been granted the citizenship of the world, is at home in all feelings, lands, and tongues, and can face death in the ultimate unity of life.

Grazia, "la linda" (the limpid), is one of the most tranquil figures in the book. We seem barely aware of her passage through the agitated worlds, but her soft Mona Lisa smile streams like a beam of light athwart the animated space. Had she been absent, there would have been lacking to the work and to the man the magic of "the eternal feminine," the solution of the ultimate rid-

dle. When she vanishes, her radiance still lingers, filling this book of exuberance and struggle with a soft lyrical melancholy, and transfusing it with a new beauty, that of peace.

CHAPTER XI

JEAN CHRISTOPHE AND HIS FELLOW MEN

NOTWITHSTANDING the intimate relationships described in the previous chapters, the path of Jean Christophe the artist is a lonely one. He walks by himself, pursuing an isolated course that leads deeper and deeper into the labyrinth of his own being. The blood of his fathers drives him along, out of an infinite of confused origins, towards that other infinite of creation. Those whom he encounters in his life's journey are no more than shadows and intimations, milestones of experience, steps of ascent and descent, episodes and adventures. But what is knowledge other than a sum of experiences; what is life beyond a sum of encounters? Other human beings are not Jean Christophe's destiny, but they are material for his creative work. They are elements of the infinite, to which he feels himself akin. Since he wishes to live life as a whole, he must accept the bitterest part of life, mankind.

All he meets are a help to him. His friends help him much; but his enemies help him still more, increasing his vitality and stimulating his energy. Thus even those who wish to hinder his work, further it; and what is the true artist other than the work upon which he is engaged?

In the great symphony of his passion, his fellow beings are high and low voices inextricably interwoven into the swelling rhythm. Many an individual theme he dismisses after a while with indifference, but many another he pursues to the end. Into his childhood's days comes Gottfried, the kindly old man, deriving more or less from the spirit of Tolstoi. He appears quite incidentally, never for more than a night, shouldering his pack, the undying Ahasuerus, but cheerful and kindly, never mutinous, never complaining, bowed but splendidly unflinching, as he wends his way Godward. Only in passing does he touch Christophe's life, but this transient contact suffices to set the creative spirit in movement. Consider, again, Hassler, the composer. His face flashes upon Jean Christophe, a lightning glimpse, at the beginning of the young man's work; but, in this instant, Jean Christophe recognizes the danger that he may come to resemble Hassler through indolence, and he collects his forces. Intimations, appeals, signs—such are other men to him. Every one acts as a stimulus, some through love, some through hatred. Old Schulz, with sympathetic understanding, helps him in a moment of despair. The family pride of Frau von Kerich and the stupidity of the Gothamites drive him anew to despair, which culminates this time in flight, and thus proves his salvation. Poison and antidote have a terrible resemblance. But to his creative spirit nothing is unmeaning, for he stamps his own significance upon all, sweeping into the current of his life the very things which were imposing themselves as hindrances to the stream. Suffering is need-

ful to him for the knowledge it brings. He draws his best forces out of sadness, out of the shocks of life. Designedly does Rolland make Jean Christophe conceive the most beautiful of his imaginative works during the times of his profoundest spiritual distresses, during the days after the death of Olivier, and during those which followed the departure of Grazia. Opposition and affliction, the foes of the ordinary man, are friends to the artist, just as much as is every experience in his career. Precisely for his profoundest creative solitude, he requires the influences which emanate from his fellows.

It is true that he takes long to learn this lesson, judging men falsely at first because he sees them temperamently, not knowledgeably. To begin with, Jean Christophe colors all human beings with his own overflowing enthusiasm, fancying them to be as upright and good-natured as he is himself, to speak no less frankly and spontaneously than he himself speaks. Then, after the first disillusionments, his views are falsified in the opposite direction by bitterness and mistrust. But gradually he learns to hold just measure between overvaluation and its opposite. Helped towards justice by Olivier, guided to gentleness by Grazia, gathering experience from life, he comes to understand, not himself alone, but his foes likewise. Almost at the end of the book we find a little scene which may seem at first sight insignificant. Jean Christophe comes across his sometime enemy, Lévy-Coeur, and spontaneously offers his hand. This reconciliation implies something more than transient sympathy. It expresses the meaning of the long

pilgrimage. It leads us to his last confession, which runs as follows, with a slight alteration from his old description of true heroism: "To know men, and yet to love them."

CHAPTER XII

JEAN CHRISTOPHE AND THE NATIONS

YOUNG Headstrong, looking upon his fellow men with passion and prejudice, fails to understand their natures; at first he contemplates the families of mankind, the nations, with like passion and prejudice. It is a part of our inevitable destiny that to begin with, and for many of us throughout life, we know our own land from within only, foreign lands only from without. Not until we have learned to see our own country from without, and to understand foreign countries from within as the natives of these countries understand them, can we acquire a European outlook, can we realize that these various countries are complementary parts of a single whole. Jean Christophe fights for life in its entirety. For this reason he must pursue the path by which the nationalist becomes a citizen of the world and acquires a "European soul."

As must happen, Jean Christophe begins with prejudice. At first he overvalues France. Ideas have been impressed upon his mind concerning the artistic, cheerful, liberal-spirited French, and he regards his own Germany as a land full of restriction. His first sight of Paris brings disillusionment; he can see nothing but lies,

clamor, and cheating. By degrees, however, he discovers that the soul of a nation is not an obvious and superficial thing, like a paving-stone in the street, but that the observer of a foreign people must dig his way to that soul through a thick stratum of illusion and falsehood. Ere long he weans himself of the habit which leads people to talk of the French, the Italians, the Jews, the Germans, as if members of these respective nations or races were all of a piece, to be classified and docketed in so simple a fashion. Each people has its own measure, its own form, customs, failings, and lies; just as each has its own climate, history, skies, and race; and these things cannot be easily summarized in a phrase or two. As with all experience, our experiences of a country must be built up from within. With words alone we can build nothing but a house of cards. "Truth is the same to all nations, but each nation has its own lies which it speaks of as its idealism. Every member of each nation inhales the appropriate atmosphere of lying idealism from the cradle to the grave, until it becomes the very breath of his life. None but isolated geniuses can free themselves by heroic struggle, during which they stand alone in the free universe of their own thought." We must free ourselves from prejudice if we are to judge freely. There is no other formula; there are no other psychological prescriptions. As with all creative work, we must permeate the material with which we have to deal, must yield ourselves without reserve. In the case of nations as in the case of individual men, he who would know them will find that there is

but one science, that of the heart and not of books.

Nothing but such mutual understanding passing from soul to soul can weld the nations together. What keeps them asunder is misunderstanding, the way those of each nation hold their own beliefs to be the only right ones, look upon their own natures as the only good ones. The mischief lies in the arrogance of persons who believe that all others are wrong. Nation is estranged from nation by the collective conceit of the members of each nation, by the "great European plague of national pride" which Nietzsche termed "the malady of the century." They stand like trees in a forest, each stem priding itself on its isolation, though the roots interlace underground and the summits touch overhead. The common people, the proletariat, living in the depths, universally human in its feelings, know naught of national contrasts. Jean Christophe, making the acquaintance of Sidonie, the Breton maidservant, recognizes with astonishment "how closely she resembles respectable folk in Germany." Look again at the summits, at the elite. Olivier and Grazia have long been living in that lofty sphere known to Goethe "in which we feel the fate of foreign nations just as we feel our own." Fellowship is a truth; mutual hatred is a falsehood; justice is the only real tie linking men and linking nations. "All of us, all nations, are debtors one to another. Let us, then, pay our debts and do our duty together." Jean Christophe has suffered at the hands of every nation, and has received gifts from every nation; disillusioned by all, he has also been benefited by all.

To the citizen of the world, at the end of his pilgrimage, all nations are alike. In each his soul can make itself at home. The musician in him dreams of a sublime work, of the great European symphony, wherein the voices of the peoples, resolving discords, will rise in the last and highest harmony, the harmony of mankind.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PICTURE OF FRANCE

THE picture of France in the great romance is notable because we are here shown a country from a twofold outlook, from without and from within, from the perspective of a German and with the eyes of a Frenchman. It is likewise notable because Christophe's judgment is not merely that of one who sees, but that of one who learns in seeing.

In every respect, the German's thought process is intentionally presented in a typical form. In his little native town he had never known a Frenchman. His feelings towards the French, of whom he had no concrete experience whatever, took the form of a genial, but somewhat contemptuous, sympathy. "The French are good fellows, but rather a slack lot," would seem to sum up his German prejudice. They are a nation of spineless artists, bad soldiers, corrupt politicians, women of easy virtue; but they are clever, amusing, and liberal-minded. Amid the order and sobriety of German life, he feels a certain yearning towards the democratic freedom of France. His first encounter with a French actress, Corinne, akin to Goethe's Philine, seems to confirm this facile judgment; but soon, when he meets

Antoinette, he comes to realize the existence of another France. "You are so serious," he says with astonishment to the demure, tongue-tied girl, who in this foreign land is hard at work as a teacher in a pretentious, parvenu household. Her characteristics are not in keeping with his traditional prejudices. A Frenchwoman ought to be trivial, saucy, and wanton. For the first time France presents to him "the riddle of its twofold nature." This initial appeal from the distance exercises a mysterious lure. He begins to realize the infinite multiplicity of these foreign worlds. Like Gluck, Wagner, Meyerbeer, and Offenbach, he takes refuge from the narrowness of German provincial life, and flees to Paris, the fabled home of universal art.

His feeling on arrival is one of disorder, and this impression never leaves him. The first and last impression, the strongest impression, to which the German in him continually returns, is that powerful energies are being squandered through lack of discipline. His first guide in the fair is one of those spurious "real Parisians," one of the immigrants who are more Parisian in their manners than those who are Parisian by birth, a Jew of German extraction named Sylvain Kohn, who here passes by the name of Hamilton, and in whose hands all the threads of the trade in art are centered. He shows Jean Christophe the painters, the musicians, the politicians, the journalists; and Jean Christophe turns away disheartened. It seems to him that all their works exhale an unpleasant "odor femininus," an oppressive atmosphere laden with scent. He sees praises showered

upon second-rate persons, hears a clamor of appreciation, without discovering a single genuine work of art. There is indeed art of a kind amid the medley, but it is over-refined and decadent; the work of taste and not of power; lacking integration through excess of irony; an Alexandrian-Greek literature and music; the breath of a moribund nation; the hothouse blossom of a perishing civilization. He sees an end, but no beginning. The German in him already hears "the rumbling of the cannon" which will destroy this enfeebled Greece.

He learns to know good men and bad; many of them are vain and stupid, dull and soulless; not one does he meet, in his experience of social life in Paris, who gives him confidence in France. The first messenger comes from a distance; this is Sidonie, the peasant girl who tends him during his illness. He learns, all at once, how calm and inviolable, how fertile and strong, is the earth, the humus, out of which the Parisian exotics suck their energies. He becomes acquainted with the people, the robust and serious-minded French people, which tills the land, caring naught for the noise of the great fair, the people which has made revolutions with the might of its wrath and has waged the Napoleonic wars with its enthusiasm. From this moment he feels there must be a real France still unknown to him. In conversation with Sylvain Kohn, he asks, "Where can I find France?" Kohn answers grandiloquently, "We are France!" Jean Christophe smiles bitterly, knowing well that he will have a long search. Those among whom he is now moving have hidden France.

At length comes the rencounter which is a turning-point in his fate; he meets Olivier, Antoinette's brother, the true Frenchman. Just as Dante, guided by Virgil, wanders through new and ever new circles of knowledge, so Jean Christophe, led by Olivier, learns with astonishment that behind this veil of noise, behind this clamorous façade, an elite is quietly laboring. He sees the work of persons whose names are never printed in the newspapers; sees the people, those who, remote from the hurly-burly, tranquilly pursue their daily round. He learns to know the new idealism of the France whose soul has been strengthened by defeat. At first this discovery fills him with rage. "I cannot understand you all," he cries to the gentle Olivier. "You live in the most beautiful of countries, are marvelously gifted, are endowed with the highest human sensibilities, and yet you fail to turn these advantages to account. You allow yourselves to be dominated and to be trampled upon by a handful of rascals. Rouse yourselves; get together; sweep your house clean!" The first and most natural thought of the German is for organization, for the drawing together of the good elements; the first thought of the strong man is to fight. Yet the best in France insist on holding aloof, some of them content with a mysterious clarity of vision, and others giving themselves up to a facile resignation. With that tincture of pessimism in their sagacity to which Renan has given such lucid expression, they shrink from the struggle. Action is uncongenial to them, and the hardest thing of all is to combine them for joint action. "They are over cautious, and visualize

defeat before the battle begins." Lacking the optimism of the Germans, they remain isolated individuals, some from prudence, others from pride. They seem to be affected with a spirit of exclusiveness, the operation of which Jean Christophe is able to study in his own dwelling. On each story there live excellent persons who could combine well, but they will have nothing to do with one another. For twenty years they pass on the staircase without becoming acquainted, without the least concern about one another's lives. Thus the best among the artists remain strangers.

Jean Christophe suddenly comes to realize with all its merits and defects the essential characteristic of the French people, the desire for liberty. Each one wishes to be free for himself, free from ties. They waste enormous quantities of energy because each tries to wage the time struggle unaided, because they will not permit themselves to be organized, because they refuse to pull together in harness. Although their activities are thus paralyzed by their reason, their minds nevertheless remain free. Consequently they are enabled to permeate every revolutionary movement with the religious fervor of the solitary, and they can perpetually renew their own revolutionary faith. These things are their salvation, preserving them from an order which would be unduly rigid, from a mechanical system which would impose excessive uniformity. Jean Christophe at length understands that the noisy fair exists only to attract the unthinking, and to preserve a creative solitude for the really active spirits. He sees that for the French temperament

this clamor is indispensable, is a means by which the French fire one another to labor; he sees that the apparent inconsequence of their thoughts is a rhythmical form of continuous renewal. His first impression, like that of so many Germans, had been that the French are effete. But after twenty years he realizes that in truth they are always ready for new beginnings, that amid the apparent contradictions of their spirit a hidden order reigns, a different order from that known to the Germans, just as their freedom is a different freedom. The citizen of the world, who no longer desires to impose upon any other nation the characteristics of his own, now contemplates with delight the eternal diversity of the races. As the light of the world is composed of the seven colors of the spectrum, so from this racial diversity arises that wonderful multiplicity in unity, the fellowship of all mankind.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PICTURE OF GERMANY

IN this romance, Germany likewise is viewed in a twofold aspect; but whereas France is seen first from without, with the eyes of a German, and then from within, with the eyes of a Frenchman, Germany is first viewed from within and then regarded from abroad. Moreover, just as happened in the case of France, two worlds are imperceptibly superimposed one upon the other; a clamant civilization and a silent one, a false culture and a true. We see respectively the old Germany, which sought its heroism in the things of the spirit, discovered its profundity in truth; and the new Germany, intoxicated with its own strength, grasping at the powers of the reason which as a philosophical discipline had transformed the world, and perverting them to the uses of business efficiency. It is not suggested that German idealism had become extinct; that there no longer existed the belief in a purer and more beautiful world freed from the compromises of our earthly lot. The trouble rather was that this idealism had been too widely diffused, had been generalized until it had grown thin and superficial. The German faith in God, turning practical, and now directed towards mundane ends, had

been transformed into grandiose ideas of the national future. In art, it had been sentimentalized. In its new manifestations, it was signally displayed in the cheap optimism of Emperor William. The defeat which had spiritualized French idealism, had, from the German side, as a victory, materialized German idealism. "What has victorious Germany given to the world?" asks Jean Christophe. He answers his own question by saying: "The flashing of bayonets; vigor without magnanimity; brutal realism; force conjoined with greed for profit; Mars as commercial traveler." He is grieved to recognize that Germany has been harmed by victory. He suffers; for "one expects more of one's own country than of another, and is hurt more by the faults of one's own land." Ever the revolutionist, Christophe detests noisy self-assertion, militarist arrogance, the churlishness of caste feeling. In his conflict with militarized Germany, in his quarrel with the sergeant at the dance in the Alsatian village inn, we have an elemental eruption of the hatred for discipline felt by the artist, the lover of freedom; we have his protest against the brutalization of thought. He is compelled to shake the dust of Germany off his feet.

When he reaches France, however, he begins to realize Germany's greatness. "In a foreign environment his judgment was freed"; this statement applies to him as to all of us. Amid the disorder of France he learned to value the active orderliness of Germany; the skeptical resignation of the French made him esteem the vigorous optimism of the Germans; he was impressed by the con-

trast between a witty nation and a thoughtful one. Yet he was under no illusions about the optimism of the new Germany, perceiving that it is often spurious. He became aware that the idealism often took the form of idealizing a dictatorial will. Even in the great masters, he saw, to quote Goethe's wonderful phrase, "how readily in the Germans the ideal waxes sentimental." His passionate sincerity, grown pitiless in the atmosphere of French clarity, revolts against this hazy idealism, which compromises between truth and desire, which justifies abuses of power with the plea of civilization, and which considers that might is sufficient warrant for victory. In France he becomes aware of the faults of France, in Germany he realizes the faults of Germany, loving both countries because they are so different. Each suffers from the defective distribution of its merits. In France, liberty is too widely diffused and engenders chaos, while a few individuals comprising the elite keep their idealism intact. In Germany, idealism, permeating the masses, has been sugared into sentimentalism and watered into a mercantile optimism; and here a still smaller elite preserves complete freedom aloof from the crowd. Each suffers from an excessive development of national peculiarities. Nationalism, as Nietzsche says, "has in France corrupted character, and in Germany has corrupted spirit and taste." Could but the two peoples draw together and impress their best qualities upon one another, they would rejoice to find, as Christophe himself had found, that "the richer he was in German dreams, the more precious to him became the clarity

of the Latin mind." Olivier and Christophe, forming a pact of friendship, hope for the day when their personal sentiments will be perpetuated in an alliance between their respective peoples. In a sad hour of international dissension, the Frenchman calls to the German in words still unfulfilled: "We hold out our hands to you. Despite lies and hatred, we cannot be kept apart. We have mutual need of one another, for the greatness of our spirit and of our race. We are the two pinions of the west. Should one be broken, the other is useless for flight. Even if war should come, this will not unclasp our hands, nor will it prevent us from soaring upwards together."

CHAPTER XV

THE PICTURE OF ITALY

JEAN CHRISTOPHE is growing old and weary when he comes to know the third country that will form part of the future European synthesis. He had never felt drawn towards Italy. As had happened many years earlier in the case of France, so likewise in the case of Italy, his sympathies had been chilled by his acceptance of the disastrous and prejudiced formulas by which the nations impose barriers between themselves while each extols its own peculiarities as peculiarly right and phenomenally strong. Yet hardly has he been an hour in Italy when these prejudices are shaken off and are replaced by enthusiastic admiration. He is fired by the unfamiliar light of the Italian landscape. He becomes aware of a new rhythm of life. He does not see fierce energy, as in Germany, or nervous mobility as in France; but the sweetness of these "centuries of ancient culture and civilization" makes a strong appeal to the northern barbarian. Hitherto his gaze has always been turned towards the future, but now he becomes aware of the charms of the past. Whereas the Germans are still in search of the best form of self-expression; and whereas the French refresh and renew themselves through

incessant change; here he finds a nation with a clear sequence of tradition, a nation which need merely be true to its own past and to its own landscape, in order to fulfill the most perfect blossoming of its nature, in order to realize beauty.

It is true that Christophe misses the element which to him is the breath of life; he misses struggle. A gentle drowsiness seems universally prevalent, a pleasant fatigue which is debilitating and dangerous. "Rome is too full of tombs, and the city exhales death." The fire kindled by Mazzini and Garibaldi, the flame in which United Italy was forged, still glows in isolated Italian souls. Here, too, there is idealism. But it differs from the German and from the French idealism; it is not yet directed towards the citizenship of the world, but remains purely national; "Italian idealism is concerned solely with itself, with Italian desires, with the Italian race, with Italian renown." In the calm southern atmosphere, this flame does not burn so fiercely as to radiate a light through Europe; but it burns brightly and beautifully in these young souls, which are apt for all passions, though the moment has not yet come for the intensest ardors.

But as soon as Jean Christophe begins to love Italy, he grows afraid of this love. He realizes that Italy is also essential to him, in order that in his music and in his life the impetuosity of the senses shall be clarified to a perfect harmony. He understands how necessary the southern world is to the northern, and is now aware that only in the trio of Germany, France, and

Italy does the full meaning of each voice become clear. In Italy, there is less illusion and more reality; but the land is too beautiful, tempting to enjoyment and killing the impulse towards action. Just as Germany finds a danger in her own idealism, because that idealism is too widely disseminated and becomes spurious in the average man; just as to France her liberty proves disastrous because it encourages in the individual an idea of absolute independence which estranges him from the community; so for Italy is her beauty a danger, since it makes her indolent, pliable, and self-satisfied. To every nation, as to every individual, the most personal of characteristics, the very things that commend the nation or the individual to others, are dangerous. It would seem, therefore, that nations and individuals must seek salvation by combining as far as possible with their own opposites. Thus will they draw nearer to the highest ideal, that of European unity, that of universal humanity. In Italy, as aforetime in France and in Germany, Jean Christophe redreams the dream which Rolland at two-and-twenty had first dreamed on the Janiculum. He foresees the European symphony, which hitherto poets alone have created in works transcending nationality, but which the nations as yet have failed to realize for themselves.

CHAPTER XVI

THE JEWS

IN the three diversified nations, by each of which Christophe is now attracted, now repelled, he finds a unifying element, adapted to each nation, but not completely merged therein—the Jews. "Do you notice," he says on one occasion to Olivier, "that we are always running up against Jews? It might be thought that we draw them as by a spell, for we continually find them in our path, sometimes as enemies and sometimes as allies." It is true that he encounters Jews wherever he goes. In his native town, the first people to give him a helping hand (for their own ends, of course) were the wealthy Jews who ran "Dionysos"; in Paris, Sylvain Kohn had been his mentor, Lévy-Coeur his bitterest foe, Weil and Mooch his most helpful friends. In like manner, Olivier and Antoinette frequently hold converse with Jews, either on terms of friendship or on terms of enmity. At every cross-roads to which the artist comes, they stand like signposts pointing the way, now towards good and now towards evil.

Christophe's first feeling is one of hostility. Although he is too open-minded to entertain a sentiment of hatred for Jews, he has imbibed from his pious

mother a certain aversion; and sharp-sighted though they are, he questions their capacity for the real understanding of his work. But again and again it becomes apparent to him that they are the only persons really concerned about his work at all, the only ones who value innovation for its own sake.

Olivier, the clearer-minded of the two, is able to explain matters to Christophe, showing that the Jews, cut off from tradition, are unconsciously the pioneers of every innovation which attacks tradition; these people without a country are the best assistants in the campaign against nationalism. "In France, the Jews are almost the only persons with whom a free man can discuss something novel, something that is really alive. The others take their stand upon the past, are firmly rooted in dead things. Of enormous importance is it that this traditional past does not exist for the Jews; or that in so far as it exists, it is a different past from ours. The result is that we can talk to Jews about to-day, whereas with those of our own race we can speak only of yesterday . . . I do not wish to imply that I invariably find their doings agreeable. Often enough, I consider these doings actually repulsive. But at least they live, and know how to value what is alive . . . In modern Europe, the Jews are the principal agents alike of good and of evil. Unwittingly they favor the germination of the seed of thought. Is it not among Jews that you have found your worst enemies and your best friends?"

Christophe agrees, saying: "It is perfectly true that they have encouraged me and helped me; that they have

uttered words which invigorated me for the struggle, showing me that I was understood. Nevertheless, these friends are my friends no longer; their friendship was but a fire of straw. No matter! A passing sheen is welcome in the night. You are right, we must not be ungrateful."

He finds a place for them, these folk without a country, in his picture of the fatherlands. He does not fail to see the faults of the Jews. He realizes that for European civilization they do not form a productive element in the highest sense of the term; he perceives that in essence their work tends to promote analysis and decomposition. But this work of decomposition seems to him important, for the Jews undermine tradition, the hereditary foe of all that is new. Their freedom from the ties of country is the gadfly which plagues the "mangy beast of nationalism" until it loses its intellectual bearings. The decomposition they effect helps us to rid ourselves of the dead past, of the "eternal yesterday"; detachment from national ties favors the growth of a new spirit which it is itself incompetent to produce. These Jews without a country are the best assistants of the "good Europeans" of the future. In many respects Christophe is repelled by them. As a man cherishing faith in life, he dislikes their skepticism; to his cheerful disposition, their irony is uncongenial; himself striving towards invisible goals, he detests their materialism, their canon that success must be tangible. Even the clever Judith Mannheim, with her "passion for intelligence," understands only his work, and not the faith upon which

that work is based. Nevertheless, the strong will of the Jews appeals to his own strength, their vitality to his vigorous life. He sees in them "the ferment of action, the yeast of life." A homeless man, he finds himself most intimately and most quickly understood by these "sanspatries." Furthermore, as a free citizen of the world, he is competent to understand on his side the tragedy of their lives, cut adrift from everything, even from themselves. He recognizes that they are useful as means to an end, although not themselves an end. He sees that, like all nations and races, the Jews must be harnessed to their contrast. "These neurotic beings . . . must be subjected to a law that will give them stability. . . . Jews are like women, splendid when ridden on the curb, though it would be intolerable to be ruled either by Jews or by women." Just as little as the French spirit or the German spirit, is the Jewish spirit adapted for universal application. But Christophe does not wish the Jews to be different from what they are. Every race is necessary, for its peculiar characteristics are requisite for the enrichment of multiplicity, and for the consequent enlargement of life. Jean Christophe, now in his later years making peace with the world, finds that everything has its appointed place in the whole scheme. Each strong tone contributes to the great harmony. What may arouse hostility in isolation, serves to bind the whole together. Nay more, it is necessary to pull down the old buildings and to clear the ground before we can begin to build anew; the analytic spirit is the precondition of the synthetic. In

all countries Christophe acclaims the folk without a country as helpers towards the foundation of the universal fatherland. He accepts them all into his dream of the New Europe, whose still distant rhythm stirs his responsive yearnings.

CHAPTER XVII

THE GENERATIONS

THUS the entire human herd is penned within ring after ring of hurdles, which the life-force must break down if it would win to freedom. We have the hurdle of the fatherland, which shuts us away from other nations; the hurdle of language, which imposes its constraint upon our thought; the hurdle of religion, which makes us unable to understand alien creeds; the hurdle of our own natures, barring the way to reality by prejudice and false learning. Terrible are the resulting isolations. The peoples fail to understand one another; the races, the creeds, individual human beings, fail to understand one another; they are segregated; each group or each individual has experience of no more than a part of life, a part of truth, a part of reality, each mistaking his part for the whole.

Even the free man, "freed from the illusion of fatherland, creed, and race," even he, who seems to have escaped from all the pens, is still enclosed within an ultimate ring of hurdles. He is confined within the limits of his own generation, for generations are the steps of the stairway by which humanity ascends. Every generation builds on the achievements of those that have gone

before; here there is no possibility of retracing our footsteps; each generation has its own laws, its own form, its own ethic, its own inner meaning. And the tragedy of such compulsory fellowship arises out of this, that a generation does not in friendly fashion accept the achievements of its predecessors, does not gladly undertake the development of their acquisitions. Like individual human beings, like nations, the generations are animated with hostile prejudices against their neighbors. Here, likewise, struggle and mistrust are the abiding law. The second generation rejects what the first has done; the deeds of the first generation do not secure approval until the third or the fourth generation. All evolution takes place according to what Goethe termed "a spiral recurrence." As we rise, we revolve on narrowing circles round the same axis. Thus the struggle between generation and generation is unceasing.

Each generation is perforce unjust towards its predecessors. "As the generations succeed one another, they become more strongly aware of the things which divide them than they are of the things which unite. They feel impelled to affirm the indispensability, the importance, of their own existence, even at the cost of injustice or falsehood to themselves." Like individual human beings, they have "an age when one must be unjust if one is to be able to live." They have to live out their own lives vigorously, asserting their own peculiarities in respect of ideas, forms, and civilization. It is just as little possible to them to be considerate towards later generations, as it has been for earlier gen-

erations to be considerate towards them. There prevails in this self-assertion the eternal law of the forest, where the young trees tend to push the earth away from the roots of the older trees, and to sap their strength, so that the living march over the corpses of the dead. The generations are at war, and each individual is unwittingly a champion on behalf of his own era, even though he may feel himself out of sympathy with that era.

Jean Christophe, the young solitary in revolt against his time, was without knowing it the representative of a fellowship. In and through him, his generation declared war against the dying generation, was unjust in his injustice, young in his youth, passionate in his passion. He grew old with his generation, seeing new waves rising to overwhelm him and his work. Now, having gained wisdom, he refused to be wroth with those who were wroth with him. He saw that his enemies were displaying the injustice and the impetuosity which he had himself displayed of yore. Where he had fancied a mechanical destiny to prevail, life had now taught him to see a living flux. Those who in his youth had been fellow revolutionists, now grown conservative, were fighting against the new youth as they themselves in youth had fought against the old. Only the fighters were new; the struggle was unchanged. For his part, Jean Christophe had a friendly smile for the new, since he loved life more than he loved himself. Vainly does his friend Emmanuel urge him to defend himself, to pronounce a moral judgment upon a generation which

declared valueless all the things which they of an earlier day had acclaimed as true with the sacrifice of their whole existence. Christophe answers: "What is true? We must not measure the ethic of a generation with the yardstick of an earlier time." Emmanuel retorts: "Why, then, did we seek a measure for life, if we were not to make it a law for others?" Christophe refers him to the perpetual flux, saying: "They have learned from us, and they are ungrateful; such is the inevitable succession of events. Enriched by our efforts, they advance further than we were able to advance, realizing the conquests which we struggled to achieve. If any of the freshness of youth yet lingers in us, let us learn from them, and seek to rejuvenate ourselves. If this is beyond our powers, if we are too old to do so, let us at least rejoice that they are young."

Generations must grow and die as men grow and die. Everything on earth is subject to nature's laws, and the man strong in faith, the pious freethinker, bows himself to the law. But he does not fail to recognize (and herein we see one of the profoundest cultural acquirements of the book) that this very flux, this transvaluation of values, has its own secular rhythm. In former times, an epoch, a style, a faith, a philosophy, endured for a century; now such phases do not outlast a generation, endure barely for a decade. The struggle has become fiercer and more impatient. Mankind marches to a quicker measure, digests ideas more rapidly than of old. "The development of European thought is proceeding at a livelier pace, much as if its acceleration

were concomitant with the advance in our powers of mechanical locomotion . . . The stores of prejudices and hopes which in former times would have nourished mankind for twenty years, are exhausted now in a lustrum. In intellectual matters the generations gallop one after another, and sometimes outspace one another." The rhythm of these spiritual transformations is the epopee of *Jean Christophe.* When the hero returns to Germany from Paris, he can hardly recognize his native land. When from Italy he revisits Paris, the city seems strange to him. Here and there he still finds the old "foire sur la place," but its affairs are transacted in a new currency; it is animated with a new faith; new ideas are exchanged in the market place; only the clamor rises as of old. Between Olivier and his son Georges lies an abyss like that which separates two worlds, and Olivier is delighted that his son should regard him with contempt. The abyss is an abyss of twenty years.

Life must eternally express itself in new forms; it refuses to allow itself to be dammed up by outworn thoughts, to be hemmed in by the philosophies and religions of the past; in its headstrong progress it sweeps accepted notions out of its way. Each generation can understand itself alone; it transmits a legacy to unknown heirs who will interpret and fulfill as seems best to them. As the heritage from his tragical and solitary generation, Rolland offers his great picture of a free soul. He offers it "to the free souls of all nations; to those who suffer, struggle, and will conquer." He offers it with the words:

"I have written the tragedy of a vanishing generation. I have made no attempt to conceal either its vices or its virtues, to hide its load of sadness, its chaotic pride, its heroic efforts, its struggles beneath the overwhelming burden of a superhuman task—the task of remaking an entire world, an ethic, an æsthetic, a faith, a new humanity. Such were we in our generation.

"Men of to-day, young men, your turn has come. March forward over our bodies. Be greater and happier than we have been.

"For my part, I say farewell to my former soul. I cast it behind me like an empty shell. Life is a series of deaths and resurrections. Let us die, Christophe, that we may be reborn."

CHAPTER XVIII

DEPARTURE

JEAN CHRISTOPHE has reached the further shore. He has stridden across the river of life, encircled by roaring waves of music. Safely carried across seems the heritage which he has borne on his shoulders through storm and flood—the meaning of the world, faith in life.

Once more he looks back towards his fellows in the land he has left. All has grown strange to him. He can no longer understand those who are laboring and suffering amid the ardors of illusion. He sees a new generation, young in a different way from his own, more energetic, more brutal, more impatient, inspired with a different heroism. The children of the new days have fortified their bodies with physical training, have steeled their courage in aerial flights. "They are proud of their muscles and their broad chests." They are proud of their country, their religion, their civilization, of all that they believe to be their own peculiar appanage; and from each of these prides they forge themselves a weapon. "They would rather act than understand." They wish to show their strength and test their powers. The dying man realizes with alarm that this new generation, which has never known war, wants war.

He looks shudderingly around: "The fire which had been smouldering in the European forest was now breaking forth into flame. Extinguished in one place, it promptly began to rage in another. Amid whirlwinds of smoke and a rain of sparks, it leaped from point to point, while the parched undergrowth kindled. Outpost skirmishes in the east had already begun, as preludes to the great war of the nations. The whole of Europe, that Europe which was still skeptical and apathetic like a dead forest, was fuel for the conflagration. The fighting spirit was universal. From moment to moment, war seemed imminent. Stifled, it was continually reborn. The most trifling pretext served to feed its strength. The world felt itself to be at the mercy of chance, which would initiate the terrible struggle. It was waiting. A feeling of inexorable necessity weighed upon all, even upon the most pacific. The ideologues, sheltering in the shade of Proudhon the titan, hailed war as man's most splendid claim to nobility.

"It was for this, then, that there had been effected a physical and moral resurrection of the races of the west! It was towards these butcheries that the streams of action and passionate faith had been hastening! None but a Napoleonic genius could have directed these blind impulses to a foreseen and deliberately chosen end. But nowhere in Europe was there any one endowed with the genius for action. It seemed as if the world had singled out the most commonplace among its sons to be governors. The forces of the human spirit were coursing in other channels."

Christophe recalls those earlier days when he and Olivier had been concerned about the prospect of war. At that time there were but distant rumblings of the storm. Now the storm clouds covered all the skies of Europe. Fruitless had been the call to unity; vain had been the pointing out of the path through the darkness. Mournfully the seer contemplates in the distance the horsemen of the Apocalypse, the heralds of fratricidal strife.

But beside the dying man is the Child, smiling and full of knowledge; the Child who is Eternal Life.

PART FIVE

INTERMEZZO SCHERZOSO

(Colas Breugnon)

"Brugnon, mauvais garçon, tu ris, n'as tu pas honte?"—"Que veux tu, mon ami? Je suis ce que je suis. Rire ne m'empêche pas de souffrir; mais souffrir n'empêchera jamais un bon Français de rire. Et qu'il rie ou larmoie, il faut d'abord qu'il voie."

COLAS BREUGNON.

CHAPTER I

TAKEN UNAWARES

AT length, in this arduous career, came a period of repose. The great ten-volume novel had been finished; the work of European scope had been completed. For the first time Romain Rolland could exist outside his work, free for new words, new configurations, new labors. His disciple Jean Christophe, "the livest man of our acquaintance," as Ellen Key phrased it, had gone out into the world; Christophe was collecting a circle of friends around him, a quiet but continually enlarging community. For Rolland, nevertheless, Jean Christophe's message was already a thing of the past. The author was in search of a new messenger, for a new message.

Romain Rolland returned to Switzerland, a land he loved, lying between the three countries to which his affection had been chiefly given. The Swiss environment had been favorable to so much of his work. *Jean Christophe* had been begun in Switzerland. A calm and beautiful summer enabled Rolland to recruit his energies. There was a certain relaxation of tension. Almost idly, he turned over various plans. He had already begun to collect materials for a new novel, a dra-

matic romance belonging to the same intellectual and cultural category as Jean Christophe.

Now of a sudden, as had happened twenty-five years earlier when the vision of *Jean Christophe* had come to him on the Janiculum, in the course of sleepless nights he was visited by a strange and yet familiar figure, that of a countryman from ancestral days whose expansive personality thrust all other plans aside. Shortly before, Rolland had revisited Clamecy. The old town had awakened memories of his childhood. Almost unawares, home influences were at work, and his native province had begun to insist that its son, who had described so many distant scenes, should depict the land of his birth. The Frenchman who had so vigorously and passionately transformed himself into a European, the man who had borne his testimony as European before the world, was seized with a desire to be, for a creative hour, wholly French, wholly Burgundian, wholly Nivernais. The musician accustomed to unite all voices in his symphonies, to combine in them the deepest expressions of feeling, was now longing to discover a new rhythm, and after prolonged tension to relax into a merry mood. For ten years he had been dominated by a sense of strenuous responsibility; the equipment of Jean Christophe had been, as it were, a burden which his soul had had to bear. Now it would be a pleasure to pen a scherzo, free and light, a work unconcerned with the stresses of politics, ethics, and contemporary history. It should be divinely irresponsible, an escape from the exactions of the time spirit.

During the day following the first night on which the idea came to him, he had exultantly dismissed other plans. The rippling current of his thoughts was effortless in its flow. Thus, to his own astonishment, during the summer months of 1913, Rolland was able to complete his light-hearted novel *Colas Breugnon,* the French intermezzo in the European symphony.

CHAPTER II

THE BURGUNDIAN BROTHER

IT seemed at first to Rolland as if a stranger, though one from his native province and of his own blood, had come cranking into his life. He felt as though, out of the clear French sky, the book had burst like a meteor upon his ken. True, the melody is new; different are the tempo, the key, the epoch. But those who have acquired a clear understanding of the author's inner life cannot fail to realize that this amusing book does not constitute an essential modification of his work. It is but a variation, in an archaic setting, upon Romain Rolland's leit-motif of faith in life. Prince Aërt and King Louis were forefathers and brothers of Olivier. In like manner Colas Breugnon, the jovial Burgundian, the lusty wood-carver, the practical joker always fond of his glass, the droll fellow, is, despite his old-world costume, a brother of Jean Christophe looking at us adown the centuries.

As ever, we find the same theme underlying the novel. The author shows us how a creative human being (those who are not creative, hardly count for Rolland) comes to terms with life, and above all with the tragedy of his own life. *Colas Breugnon,* like *Jean Christophe,* is the

romance of an artist's life. But the Burgundian is an artist of a vanished type, such as could not without anachronism have been introduced into *Jean Christophe.* Colas Breugnon is an artist only through fidelity, diligence, and fervor. In so far as he is an artist, it is in the faithful performance of his daily task. What raises him to the higher levels of art is not inspiration, but his broad humanity, his earnestness, and his vigorous simplicity. For Rolland, he was typical of the nameless artists who carved the stone figures that adorn French cathedrals, the artist-craftsmen to whom we owe the beautiful gateways, the splendid castles, the glorious wrought ironwork of the middle ages. These artificers did not fashion their own vanity into stone, did not carve their own names upon their work; but they put something into that work which has grown rare to-day, the joy of creation. In *Jean Christophe,* on one occasion, Romain Rolland had indited an ode to the civic life of the old masters who were wholly immersed in the quiet artistry of their daily occupations. He had drawn attention to the life of Sebastian Bach and his congeners. In like manner, he now wished to display anew what he had depicted in so many portraits of the artists, in the studies of Michelangelo, Beethoven, Tolstoi, and Handel. Like these sublime figures, Colas Breugnon took delight in his creative work. The magnificent inspiration that animated them was lacking to the Burgundian, but Breugnon had a genius for straightforwardness and for sensual harmony. Without aspiring to bring salvation to the world, not attempting to

wrestle with the problems of passion and the spiritual life, he was content to strive for that supreme simplicity of craftsmanship which has a perfection of its own and thus brings the craftsman into touch with the eternal. The primitive artist-artisan is contrasted with the comparatively artificialized artist of modern days; Hephaistos, the divine smith, is contrasted with the Pythian Apollo and with Dionysos. The simpler artist's sphere is perforce narrower, but it is enough that an artist should be competent to fill the sphere for which he is preordained.

Nevertheless, Colas Breugnon would not have been the typical artist of Rolland's creation, had not struggle been a conspicuous feature of his life, and had we not been shown through him that the real man is always stronger than his destiny. Even the cheerful Colas experiences a full measure of tragedy. His house is burned down, and the work of thirty years perishes in the flames; his wife dies; war devastates the country; envy and malice prevent the success of his last artistic creations; in the end, illness elbows him out of active life. The only defenses left him against his troubles, against age, poverty, and gout, are "the souls he has made," his children, his apprentice, and one friend. Yet this man, sprung from the Burgundian peasantry, has an armor to protect him from the bludgeonings of fate, armor no less effectual than was the invincible German optimism of Jean Christophe or the inviolable faith of Olivier. Breugnon has his imperturbable cheerfulness. "Sorrows never prevent my laughing; and

when I laugh, I can always weep at the same time." Epicure, gormandizer, deep drinker, ever ready to leave work for play, he is none the less a stoic when misfortune comes, an uncomplaining hero in adversity. When his house burns, he exclaims: "The less I have, the more I am." The Burgundian craftsman is a man of lesser stature than his brother of the Rhineland, but the Burgundian's feet are no less firmly planted on the beloved earth. Whereas Christophe's daimon breaks forth in storms of rage and frenzy, Colas reacts against the visitations of destiny with the serene mockery of a healthy Gallic temperament. His whimsical humor helps him to face disaster and death. Assuredly this mental quality is one of the most valuable forms of spiritual freedom.

Freedom, however, is the least important among the characteristics of Rolland's heroes. His primary aim is always to show us a typical example of a man armed against his doom and against his god, a man who will not allow himself to be defeated by the forces of life. In the work we are now considering, it amuses him to present the struggle as a comedy, instead of portraying it in a more serious dramatic vein. But the comedy is always transfigured by a deeper meaning. Despite the lighter touches, as when the forlorn old Colas is unwilling to take refuge in his daughter's house, or as when he boastfully feigns indifference after the destruction of his home (lest his soul should be vexed by having to accept the sympathy of his fellow men), still amid

this tragi-comedy he is animated by the unalloyed desire to stand by his own strength.

Before everything, Colas Breugnon is a free man. That he is a Frenchman, that he is a burgher, are secondary considerations. He loves his king, but only so long as the king leaves him his liberty; he loves his wife, but follows his own bent; he is on excellent terms with the priest of a neighboring parish, but never goes to church; he idolizes his children, but his vigorous individuality makes him unwilling to live with them. He is friendly with all, but subject to none; he is freer than the king; he has that sense of humor characteristic of the free spirit to whom the whole world belongs. Among all nations and in all ages, that being alone is truly alive who is stronger than fate, who breaks through the seine of men and things as he swims freely down the great stream of life. We have seen how Christophe, the Rhinelander, exclaimed: "What is life? A tragedy! Hurrah!" From his Burgundian brother comes the response: "Struggle is hard, but struggle is a delight." Across the barriers of epoch and language, the two look on one another with sympathetic understanding. We realize that free men form a spiritual kinship independent of the limitations imposed by race and time.

CHAPTER III

GAULOISERIES

ROMAIN ROLLAND had looked upon *Colas Breugnon* as an intermezzo, as an easy occupation, which should, for a change, enable him to enjoy the delights of irresponsible creation. But there is no irresponsibility in art. A thing arduously conceived is often heavy in execution, whereas that which is lightly undertaken may prove exceptionally beautiful.

From the artistic point of view, *Colas Breugnon* may perhaps be regarded as Rolland's most successful work. This is because it is woven in one piece, because it flows with a continuous rhythm, because its progress is never arrested by the discussion of thorny problems. *Jean Christophe* was a book of responsibility and balance. It was to discuss all the phenomena of the day; to show how they looked from every side, in action and reaction. Each country in turn made its demand for full consideration. The encyclopedic picture of the world, the deliberate comprehensiveness of the design, necessitated the forcible introduction of many elements which transcended the powers of harmonious composition. But *Colas Breugnon* is written throughout in the same key. The first sentence gives the note like a tuning fork, and

thence the entire book takes its pitch. Throughout, the same lively melody is sustained. The writer employs a peculiarly happy form. His style is poetic without being actually versified; it has a melodious measure without being strictly metrical. The book, printed as prose, is written in a sort of free verse, with an occasional rhymed series of lines. It is possible that Rolland adopted the fundamental tone from Paul Fort; but that which in the *Ballades françaises* with their recurrent burdens leads to the formation of canzones, is here punctuated throughout an entire book, while the phrasing is most ingeniously infused with archaic French locutions after the manner of Rabelas.

Here, Rolland wishes to be a Frenchman. He goes to the very heart of the French spirit, has recourse to "gauloiseries," and makes the most successful use of the new medium, which is unique, and which cannot be compared with any familiar literary form. For the first time we encounter an entire novel which, while written in old-fashioned French like that of Balzac's *Contes drolatiques,* succeeds in making its intricate diction musical throughout. "The Old Woman's Death" and "The Burned House" are as vividly picturesque as ballads. Their characteristic and spiritualized rhythmical quality contrasts with the serenity of the other pictures, although they are not essentially different from these. The moods pass lightly, like clouds drifting across the sky; and even beneath the darkest of these clouds, the horizon of the age smiles with a fruitful clearness. Never was Rolland able to give such exqui-

site expression to his poetic bent as in this book wherein he is wholly the Frenchman. What he presents to us as whimsical sport and caprice, displays more plainly than anything else the living wellspring of his power: his French soul immersed in its favorite element of music.

CHAPTER IV

A FRUSTRATE MESSAGE

JEAN CHRISTOPHE was the deliberate divergence from a generation. *Colas Breugnon* is another divergence, unconsciously effected; a divergence from the traditional France, heedlessly cheerful. This "bourguinon salé" wished to show his fellow countrymen of a later day how life can be salted with mockery and yet be full of enjoyment. Rolland here displayed all the riches of his beloved homeland, displaying above all the most beautiful of these goods, the joy of life.

A heedless world, our world of to-day, was to be awakened by the poet singing of an earlier world which had been likewise impoverished, had likewise wasted its energies in futile hostility. A call to joy from a Frenchman, echoing down the ages, was to answer the voice of the German, Jean Christophe. Their two voices were to mingle harmoniously as the voices mingle in the Ode to Joy of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. During the tranquil summer the pages were stacked like golden sheaves. The book was in the press, to appear during the next summer, that of 1914.

But the summer of 1914 reaped a bloody harvest. The roar of the cannon, drowning Jean Christophe's

warning cry, deafened the ears of those who might otherwise have hearkened also to the call to joy. For five years, the five most terrible years in the world's history, the luminous figure stood unheeded in the darkness. There was no conjuncture between *Colas Breugnon* and "la douce France"; for this book, with its description of the cheerful France of old, was not to appear until that Old France had vanished for ever.

PART SIX

THE CONSCIENCE OF EUROPE

One who is aware of values which he regards as a hundredfold more precious than the wellbeing of the "fatherland," of society, of the kinships of blood and race, values which stand above fatherlands and races, international values, such a man would prove himself hypocrite should he try to play the patriot. It is a degradation of mankind to encourage national hatred, to admire it, or to extol it.

NIETZSCHE, *Vorreden Material im Nachlass.*

La vocation ne peut être connue et prouvée que par le sacrifice que fait le savant et l'artiste de son repos et son bien-être pour suivre sa vocation.

LETTER DE TOLSTOI A ROMAIN ROLLAND.

4, Octobre, 1887.

CHAPTER I

THE WARDEN OF THE INHERITANCE

THE events of August 2, 1914, broke Europe into fragments. Therewith collapsed the faith which the brothers in the spirit, Jean Christophe and Olivier, had been building with their lives. A great heritage was cast aside. The idea of human brotherhood, once sacred, was buried contemptuously by the grave-diggers of all the lands at war, buried among the million corpses of the slain.

Romain Rolland was faced by an unparalleled responsibility. He had presented the problems in imaginative form. Now they had come up for solution as terrible realities. Faith in Europe, the faith which he had committed to the care of Jean Christophe, had no protector, no advocate, at a time when it was more than ever necessary to raise its standard against the storm. Well did the poet know that a truth remains naught but a half-truth while it exists merely in verbal formulation. It is in action that a thought becomes genuinely alive. A faith proves itself real in the form of a public confession.

In *Jean Christophe,* Romain Rolland had delivered his message to this fated hour. To make the confession a live thing, he had to give something more, himself. The

time had come for him to do what Jean Christophe had done for Olivier's son. He must guard the sacred flame; he must fulfil what his hero had prophetically foreshadowed. The way in which Rolland fulfilled this obligation has become for us all an imperishable example of spiritual heroism, which moves us even more strongly than we were moved by his written words. We saw his life and personality taking the form of an actually living conviction. We saw how, with the whole power of his name, and with all the energy of his artistic temperament, he took his stand against multitudinous adversaries in his own land and in other countries, his gaze fixed upon the heaven of his faith.

Rolland had never failed to recognize that in a time of widespread illusion it would be difficult to hold fast to his convictions, however self-evident they might seem. But, as he wrote to a French friend in September, 1914, "We do not choose our own duties. Duty forces itself upon us. Mine is, with the aid of those who share my ideas, to save from the deluge the last vestiges of the European spirit . . . Mankind demands of us that those who love their fellows should take a firm stand, and should even fight, if needs must, against those they love."

For five years we have watched the heroism of this fight, pursuing its own course amid the warring of the nations. We have watched the miracle of one man's keeping his senses amid the frenzied millions, of one man's remaining free amid the universal slavery of public opinion. We have watched love at war with hate, the European at war with the patriots, conscience at war

with the world. Throughout this long and bloody night, when we were often ready to perish from despair at the meaninglessness of nature, the one thing which has consoled us and sustained us has been the recognition that the mighty forces which were able to crush towns and annihilate empires, were powerless against an isolated individual possessed of the will and the courage to be free. Those who deemed themselves the victors over millions, were to find that there was one thing which they could not master, a free conscience.

Vain, therefore, was their triumph, when they buried the crucified thought of Europe. True faith works miracles. Jean Christophe had burst the bonds of death, had risen again in the living form of his own creator.

CHAPTER II

FOREARMED

WE do not detract from the moral services of Romain Rolland, but we may perhaps excuse to some extent his opponents, when we insist that Rolland had excelled all contemporary imaginative writers in the profundity of his preparatory studies of war and its problems. If to-day, in retrospect, we contemplate his writings, we marvel to note how, from the very first and throughout a long period of years, they combined to build up, as it were, a colossal pyramid, culminating in the point upon which the lightnings of war were to be discharged. For twenty years, the author's thought, his whole creative activity, had been unintermittently concentrated upon the contradictions between spirit and force, between freedom and the fatherland, between victory and defeat. Through a hundred variations he had pursued the same fundamental theme, treating it dramatically, epically, and in manifold other ways. There is hardly a problem relevant to this question which is not touched upon by Christophe and Olivier, by Aërt and by the Girondists, in their discussions. Intellectually regarded, Rolland's writings are a maneuvering ground for all the incentives to war. He thus had

his conclusions already drawn when others were beginning an attempt to come to terms with events. As historian, he had described the perpetual recurrence of war's typical accompaniments, had discussed the psychology of mass suggestion, and had shown the effects of wartime mentality upon the individual. As moralist and as citizen of the world, he had long ere this formulated his creed. We may say, in fact, that Rolland's mind had been in a sense immunized against the illusions of the crowd and against infection by prevalent falsehoods.

Not by chance does an artist decide which problems he will consider. The dramatist does not make a "lucky selection" of his theme. The musician does not "discover" a beautiful melody, but already has it within him. It is not the artist who creates the problems, but the problems which create the artist; just as it is not the prophet who makes his prophecy, but the foresight which creates the prophet. The artist's choice is always preordained. The man who has foreseen the essential problem of a whole civilization, of a disastrous epoch, must of necessity, in the decisive hour, play a leading part. He only who had contemplated the coming European war as an abyss towards which the mad hunt of recent decades, making light of every warning, had been speeding, only such a one could command his soul, could refrain from joining the bacchanalian rout, could listen unmoved to the throbbing of the war drums. Who but such a man could stand upright in the greatest storm of illusion the world has ever known?

Thus it came to pass that not merely during the first

hour of the war was Rolland in opposition to other writers and artists of the day. This opposition dated from the very inception of his career, and hence for twenty years he had been a solitary. The reason why the contrast between his outlook and that of his generation had not hitherto been conspicuous, the reason why the cleavage was not disclosed until the actual outbreak of war, lies in this, that Rolland's divergence was a matter not so much of mood as of character. Before the apocalyptic year, almost all persons of artistic temperament had recognized quite as definitely as Rolland had recognized that a fratricidal struggle between Europeans would be a crime, would disgrace civilization. With few exceptions, they were pacifists. It would be more correct to say that with few exceptions they believed themselves to be pacifists. For pacifism does not simply mean, to be a friend to peace, but to be a worker in the cause of peace, an εἰρηνοποιός, as the New Testament has it. Pacifism signifies the activity of an effective will to peace, not merely the love of an easy life and a preference for repose. It signifies struggle; and like every struggle it demands, in the hour of danger, self-sacrifice and heroism. Now these "pacifists" we have just been considering had merely a sentimental fondness for peace; they were friendly towards peace, just as they were friendly towards ideas of social equality, towards philanthropy, towards the abolition of capital punishment. Such faith as they possessed was a faith devoid of passion. They wore their opinions as they wore their clothing, and when the time of trial came they were ready to exchange their

pacifist ethic for the ethic of the war-makers, were ready to don a national uniform in matters of opinion. At bottom, they knew the right just as well as Rolland, but they had not the courage of their opinions. Goethe's saying to Eckermann applies to them with deadly force. "All the evils of modern literature are due to lack of character in individual investigators and writers."

Thus Rolland did not stand alone in his knowledge, which was shared by many intellectuals and statesmen. But in his case, all his knowledge was tinged with religious fervor; his beliefs were a living faith; his thoughts were actions. He was unique among imaginative writers for the splendid vigor with which he remained true to his ideals when all others were deserting the standard; for the way in which he defended the European spirit against the raging armies of the sometime European intellectuals now turned patriots. Fighting as he had fought from youth upwards on behalf of the invisible against the world of reality, he displayed, as a foil to the heroism of the trenches, a higher heroism still. While the soldiers were manifesting the heroism of blood, Rolland manifested the heroism of the spirit, and showed the glorious spectacle of one who was able, amid the intoxication of the war-maddened masses, to maintain the sobriety and freedom of an unclouded mind.

CHAPTER III

THE PLACE OF REFUGE

AT the outbreak of the war, Romain Rolland was in Vevey, a small and ancient city on the lake of Geneva. With few exceptions he spent his summers in Switzerland, the country in which some of his best literary work had been accomplished. In Switzerland, where the nations join fraternal hands to form a state, where Jean Christophe had heralded European unity, Rolland received the news of the world disaster.

Of a sudden it seemed as if his whole life had become meaningless. Vain had been his exhortations, vain the twenty years of ardent endeavor. He had feared this disaster since early boyhood. He had made Olivier cry in torment of soul: "I dread war so greatly, I have dreaded it for so long. It has been a nightmare to me, and it poisoned my childhood's days." Now, what he had prophetically anticipated had become a terrible reality for hundreds of millions of human beings. The agony of the hour was nowise diminished because he had foreseen its coming to be inevitable. On the contrary, while others hastened to deaden their senses with the opium of false conceptions of duty and with the hashish dreams of victory, Rolland's pitiless sobriety enabled

him to look far out into the future. On August 3rd he wrote in his diary: "I feel at the end of my resources. I wish I were dead. It is horrible to live when men have gone mad, horrible to witness the collapse of civilization. This European war is the greatest catastrophe in the history of many centuries, the overthrow of our dearest hopes of human brotherhood." A few days later, in still greater despair, he penned the following entry: "My distress is so colossal an accumulation of distresses that I can scarcely breathe. The ravaging of France, the fate of my friends, their deaths, their wounds. The grief at all this suffering, the heartrending sympathetic anguish with the millions of sufferers. I feel a moral death-struggle as I look on at this mad humanity which is offering up its most precious possessions, its energies, its genius, its ardors of heroic devotion, which is sacrificing all these things to the murderous and stupid idols of war. I am heartbroken at the absence of any divine message, any divine spirit, any moral leadership, which might upbuild the City of God when the carnage is at an end. The futility of my whole life has reached its climax. If I could but sleep, never to reawaken."

Frequently, in this torment of mind, he desired to return to France; but he knew that he could be of no use there. In youth, undersized and delicate, he had been unfit for military service. Now, hard upon fifty years of age, he would obviously be of even less account. The merest semblance of helping in the war would have been repugnant to his conscience, for his acceptance of Tolstoi's teaching had made his convictions steadfast. He

knew that it was incumbent upon him to defend France, but to do so in another sense than that of the combatants and that of the intellectuals clamorous with hate. "A great nation," he wrote more than a year later, in the preface to *Au-dessus de la mêlée,* "has not only its frontiers to protect; it must also protect its good sense. It must protect itself from the hallucinations, injustices, and follies which war lets loose. To each his part. To the armies, the protection of the soil of their native land. To the thinkers, the defense of its thought. . . . The spirit is by no means the most insignificant part of a people's patrimony." In these opening days of misery, it was not yet clear to him whether and how he would be called upon to speak. Yet he knew that if and when he did speak, he would take up his parable on behalf of intellectual freedom and supranational justice.

But justice must have freedom of outlook. Nowhere except in a neutral country could the observer listen to all voices, make acquaintance with all opinions. From such a country alone could he secure a view above the smoke of the battle-field, above the mist of falsehood, above the poison gas of hatred. Here he could retain freedom of judgment and freedom of speech. In *Jean Christophe,* he had shown the dangerous power of mass suggestion. "Under its influence," he had written, "in every country the firmest intelligences felt their most cherished convictions melting away." No one knew better than Rolland "the spiritual contagion, the all-pervading insanity, of collective thought." Knowing these things so well, he wished all the more to remain free

from them, to shun the intoxication of the crowd, to avoid the risk of having to follow any other leadership than that of his conscience. He had merely to turn to his own writings. He could read there the words of Olivier: "I love France, but I cannot for the sake of France kill my soul or betray my conscience. This would indeed be to betray my country. How can I hate when I feel no hatred? How can I truthfully act the comedy of hate?" Or, again, he could read this memorable confession: "I will not hate. I will be just even to my enemies. Amid all the stresses of passion, I wish to keep my vision clear, that I may understand everything and thus be able to love everything." Only in freedom, only in independence of spirit, can the artist aid his nation. Thus alone can he serve his generation, thus alone can he serve humanity. Loyalty to truth is loyalty to the fatherland.

What had befallen through chance was now confirmed by deliberate choice. During the five years of the war Romain Rolland remained in Switzerland, Europe's heart; remained there that he might fulfil his task, "de dire ce qui est juste et humain." Here, where the breezes blow freely from all other lands, and whence a voice could pass freely across all the frontiers, here where no fetters were imposed upon speech, he followed the call of his invisible duty. Close at hand the endless waves of blood and hatred emanating from the frenzy of war were foaming against the frontiers of the cantonal state. But throughout the storm, the magnetic needle of one intelligence continued to point unerringly towards the immutable pole of life—to point towards love.

CHAPTER IV

THE SERVICE OF MAN

IN Rolland's view it was the artist's duty to serve his fatherland by conscientious service to all mankind, to play his part in the struggle by waging war against the suffering the war was causing and against the thousandfold torments entailed by the war. He rejected the idea of absolute aloofness. "An artist has no right to hold aloof while he is still able to help others." But this aid, this participation, must not take the form of fostering the murderous hatred which already animated the millions. The aim must be to unite the millions further, where unseen ties already existed, in their infinite suffering. He therefore took his part in the ranks of the helpers, not weapon in hand, but following the example of Walt Whitman, who, during the American Civil War, served as hospital assistant.

Hardly had the first blows been struck when cries of anguish from all lands began to be heard in Switzerland. Thousands who were without news of fathers, husbands, and sons in the battlefields, stretched despairing arms into the void. By hundreds, by thousands, by tens of thousands, letters and telegrams poured into the little House of the Red Cross in Geneva, the only international

rallying point that still remained. Isolated, like stormy petrels, came the first inquiries for missing relatives; then these inquiries themselves became a storm. The letters arrived in sackfuls. Nothing had been prepared for dealing with such an inundation of misery. The Red Cross had no space, no organization, no system, and above all no helpers.

Romain Rolland was one of the first to offer personal assistance. The Musée Rath was quickly made available for the purposes of the Red Cross. In one of the small wooden cubicles, among hundreds of girls, women, and students, Rolland sat for more than eighteen months, engaged each day for from six to eight hours side by side with the head of the undertaking, Dr. Ferrière, to whose genius for organization myriads owe it that the period of suspense was shortened. Here Rolland filed letters, wrote letters, performed an abundance of detail work, seemingly of little importance. But how momentous was every word to the individuals whom he could help, for in this vast universe each suffering individual is mainly concerned about his own particular grain of unhappiness. Countless persons to-day, unaware of the fact, have to thank the great writer for news of their lost relatives. A rough stool, a small table of unpolished deal, the turmoil of typewriters, the bustle of human beings questioning, calling one to another, hastening to and fro—such was Romain Rolland's battlefield in this campaign against the afflictions of the war. Here, while other authors and intellectuals were doing their utmost to foster mutual hatred, he endeavored to promote rec-

onciliation, to alleviate the torment of a fraction among the countless sufferers by such consolation as the circumstances rendered possible. He neither desired, nor occupied, a leading position in the work of the Red Cross; but, like so many other nameless assistants, he devoted himself to the daily task of promoting the interchange of news. His deeds were inconspicuous, and are therefore all the more memorable.

When he was allotted the Nobel peace prize, he refused to retain the money for his own use, and devoted the whole sum to the mitigation of the miseries of Europe, that he might suit the action to the word, the word to the action. Ecce homo! Ecce poeta!

CHAPTER V

THE TRIBUNAL OF THE SPIRIT

NO one had been more perfectly forearmed than Romain Rolland. The closing chapters of *Jean Christophe* foretell the coming mass illusion. Never for a moment had he entertained the vain hope of certain idealists that the fact (or semblance) of civilization, that the increase of human kindliness which we owe to two millenniums of Christianity, would make a future war, comparatively humane. Too well did he know as historian that in the initial outbursts of war passion the veneer of civilization and Christianity would be rubbed off; that in all nations alike the naked bestiality of human beings would be disclosed; that the smell of the shed blood would reduce them all to the level of wild beasts. He did not conceal from himself that this strange halitus is able to dull and to confuse even the gentlest, the kindliest, the most intelligent of souls. The rending asunder of ancient friendships, the sudden solidarity among persons most opposed in temperament now eager to abase themselves before the idol of the fatherland, the total disappearance of conscientious conviction at the first breath of the actualities of war—in *Jean Christophe* these things were written no less plainly than

when of old the fingers of the hand wrote upon the palace wall in Babylon.

Nevertheless, even this prophetic soul had underestimated the cruel reality. During the opening days of the war, Rolland was horrified to note how all previous wars were being eclipsed in the atrocity of the struggle, in its material and spiritual brutality, in its extent, and in the intensity of its passion. All possible anticipations had been outdone. Although for thousands of years, by twos or variously allied, the peoples of Europe had almost unceasingly been warring one with another, never before had their mutual hatreds, as manifested in word and deed, risen to such a pitch as in this twentieth century after the birth of Christ. Never before in the history of mankind did hatred extend so widely through the populations; never did it rage so fiercely among the intellectuals; never before was oil pumped into the flames as it was now pumped from innumerable fountains and tubes of the spirit, from the canals of the newspapers, from the retorts of the professors. All evil instincts were fostered among the masses. The whole world of feeling, the whole world of thought, became militarized. The loathsome organization for the dealing of death by material weapons was yet more loathsomely reflected in the organization of national telegraphic bureaus to scatter lies like sparks over land and sea. For the first time, science, poetry, art, and philosophy became no less subservient to war than mechanical ingenuity was subservient. In the pulpits and professorial chairs, in the research laboratories, in the editorial offices and in the

authors' studies, all energies were concentrated as by an invisible system upon the generation and diffusion of hatred. The seer's apocalyptic warnings were surpassed.

A deluge of hatred and blood such as even the blood-drenched soil of Europe had never known, flowed from land to land. Romain Rolland knew that a lost world, a corrupt generation, cannot be saved from its illusions. A world conflagration cannot be extinguished by a word, cannot be quelled by the efforts of naked human hands. The only possible endeavor was to prevent others adding fuel to the flames, and with the lash of scorn and contempt to deter as far as might be those who were engaged in such criminal undertakings. It might be possible, too, to build an ark wherein what was intellectually precious in this suicidal generation might be saved from the deluge, might be made available for those of a future day when the waters of hatred should have subsided. A sign might be uplifted, round which the faithful could rally, building a temple of unity amid, and yet high above, the battlefields.

Among the detestable organizations of the general staffs, mechanical ingenuity, lying, and hatred, Rolland dreamed of establishing another organization, a fellowship of the free spirits of Europe. The leading imaginative writers, the leading men of science, were to constitute the ark he desired; they were to be the sustainers of justice in these days of injustice and falsehood. While the masses, deceived by words, were raging against one another in blind fury, the artists, the writers, the men of

science, of Germany, France, and England, who for centuries had been coöperating for discoveries, advances, ideals, could combine to form a tribunal of the spirit which, with scientific earnestness, should devote itself to extirpating the falsehoods that were keeping their respective peoples apart. Transcending nationality, they could hold intercourse on a higher plane. For it was Rolland's most cherished hope that the great artists and great investigators would refuse to identify themselves with the crime of the war, would refrain from abandoning their freedom of conscience and from entrenching themselves behind a facile "my country, right or wrong." With few exceptions, intellectuals had for centuries recognized the repulsiveness of war. More than a thousand years earlier, when China was threatened by ambitious Mongols, Li Tai Peh had exclaimed: "Accursed be war! Accursed the work of weapons! The sage has nothing to do with these follies." The contention that the sage has naught to do with such follies seems to rise like an unenunciated refrain from all the utterances of western men of learning since Europe began to have a common life. In Latin letters (for Latin, the medium of intercourse, was likewise the symbol of supranational fellowship), the great humanists whose respective countries were at war exchanged their regrets, and offered mutual philosophical solace against the murderous illusions of their less instructed fellows. Herder was speaking for the learned Germans of the eighteenth century when he wrote: "For fatherland to engage in a bloody struggle with fatherland is the most preposterous barbar-

ism." Goethe, Byron, Voltaire, and Rousseau, were at one in their contempt for the purposeless butcheries of war. To-day, in Rolland's view, the leading intellectuals, the great scientific investigators whose minds would perforce remain unclouded, the most humane among the imaginative writers, could join in a fellowship whose members would renounce the errors of their respective nations. He did not, indeed, venture to hope that there would be a very large number of persons whose souls would remain free from the passions of the time. But spiritual force is not based upon numbers; its laws are not those of armies. In this field, Goethe's saying is applicable: "Everything great, and everything most worth having comes from a minority. It cannot be supposed that reason will ever become popular. Passion and sentiment may be popularized, the reason will always remain a privilege of the few." This minority, however, may acquire authority through spiritual force. Above all, it may constitute a bulwark against falsehood. If men of light and leading, free men of all nationalities, were to meet somewhere, in Switzerland perhaps, to make common cause against every injustice, by whomever committed, a sanctuary would at length be established, an asylum for truth which was now everywhere bound and gagged. Europe would have a span of soil for home; mankind would have a spark of hope. Holding mutual converse, these best of men could enlighten one another; and the reciprocal illumination on the part of such unprejudiced persons could not fail to diffuse its light over the world.

Such was the mood in which Rolland took up his pen for the first time after the outbreak of war. He wrote an open letter to Hauptmann, to the author whom among Germans he chiefly honored for goodness and humaneness. Within the same hour he wrote to Verhaeren, Germany's bitterest foe. Rolland thus stretched forth both his hands, rightward and leftward, in the hope that he could bring his two correspondents together, so that at least within the domain of pure spirit there might be a first essay towards spiritual reconciliation, what time upon the battlefields the machine-guns with their infernal clatter were mowing down the sons of France, Germany, Belgium, Britain, Austria-Hungary, and Russia.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONTROVERSY WITH GERHART HAUPTMANN

ROMAIN ROLLAND had never been personally acquainted with Gerhart Hauptmann. He was familiar with the German's writings, and admired their passionate participation in all that is human, loved them for the goodness with which the individual figures are intentionally characterized. On a visit to Berlin, he had called at Hauptmann's house, but the playwright was away. The two had never before exchanged letters.

Nevertheless, Rolland decided to address Hauptmann as a representative German author, as writer of *Die Weber* and as creator of many other figures typifying suffering. He wrote on August 29, 1914, the day on which a telegram issued by Wolff's agency, ludicrously exaggerating in pursuit of the policy of "frightfulness," had announced that "the old town of Louvain, rich in works of art, exists no more to-day." An outburst of indignation was assuredly justified, but Rolland endeavored to exhibit the utmost self-control. He began as follows: "I am not, Gerhart Hauptmann, one of those Frenchmen who regard Germany as a nation of barbarians. I know the intellectual and moral great-

ness of your mighty race. I know all that I owe to the thinkers of Old Germany; and even now, at this hour, I recall the example and the words of *our* Goethe—for he belongs to the whole of humanity—repudiating all national hatreds and preserving the calmness of his soul on those heights 'where we feel the happiness and the misfortunes of other peoples as our own.' " He goes on with a pathetic self-consciousness for the first time noticeable in the work of this most modest of writers. Recognizing his mission, he lifts his voice above the controversies of the moment. "I have labored all my life to bring together the minds of our two nations; and the atrocities of this impious war in which, to the ruin of European civilization, they are involved, will never lead me to soil my spirit with hatred."

Now Rolland sounds a more impassioned note. He does not hold Germany responsible for the war. "War springs from the weakness and stupidity of nations." He ignores political questions, but protests vehemently against the destruction of works of art, asking Hauptmann and his countrymen, "Are you the grandchildren of Goethe or of Attila?" Proceeding more quietly, he implores Hauptmann to refrain from any attempt to justify such things. "In the name of our Europe, of which you have hitherto been one of the most illustrious champions, in the name of that civilization for which the greatest of men have striven all down the ages, in the name of the very honor of your Germanic race, Gerhart Hauptmann, I adjure you, I challenge you, you and the intellectuals of Germany, among whom I reckon so many

friends, to protest with the utmost energy against this crime which will otherwise recoil upon yourselves." Rolland's hope was that the Germans would, like himself, refuse to condone the excesses of the war-makers, would refuse to accept the war as a fatality. He hoped for a public protest from across the Rhine. Rolland was not aware that at this time no one in Germany had or could have any inkling of the true political situation. He was not aware that such a public protest as he desired was quite impossible.

Gerhart Hauptmann's answer struck a fiercer note than Rolland's letter. Instead of complying with the Frenchman's plea, instead of repudiating the German militarist policy of frightfulness, he attempted, with sinister enthusiasm, to justify that policy. Accepting the maxim, "war is war," he, somewhat prematurely, defended the right of the stronger. "The weak naturally have recourse to vituperation." He declared the report of the destruction of Louvain to be false. It was, he said, a matter of life or death for Germany that the German troops should effect "their peaceful passage" through Belgium. He referred to the pronouncements of the general staff, and quoted, as the highest authority for truth, the words of "the Emperor himself."

Therewith the controversy passed from the spiritual to the political plane. Rolland, embittered in his turn, rejected the views of Hauptmann, who was lending his moral authority to the support of Schlieffen's aggressive theories. Hauptmann, declared Rolland, was "accepting responsibility for the crimes of those who wield

authority." Instead of promoting harmony, the correspondence was fostering discord. In reality the two had no common ground for discussion. The attempt was ill-timed, passion still ran too high; the mists of prevalent falsehood still obscured vision on both sides. The waters of the flood continued to rise, the infinite deluge of hatred and error. Brethren were as yet unable to recognize one another in the darkness.

CHAPTER VII

THE CORRESPONDENCE WITH VERHAEREN

HAVING written to Gerhart Hauptmann, the German, Rolland almost simultaneously addressed himself to Emile Verhaeren, the Belgian, who had been an enthusiast for European unity, but had now become one of Germany's bitterest foes. Perhaps no one is better entitled than the present writer to bear witness that Verhaeren's hostility to Germany was a new thing. As long as peace lasted, the Belgian poet had known no other ideal than that of international brotherhood, had detested nothing more heartily than he detested international discord. Shortly before the war, in his preface to Henri Guilbeaux's anthology of German poetry, Verhaeren had spoken of "the ardor of the nations," which, he said, "in defiance of that other passion which tends to make them quarrel, inclines them towards mutual love." The German invasion of Belgium taught him to hate. His verses, which had hitherto been odes to creative force, were henceforward dithyrambs in favor of hostility.

Rolland had sent Verhaeren a copy of his protest against the destruction of Louvain and the bombardment of Rheims cathedral. Concurring in this protest, Ver-

haeren wrote: "Sadness and hatred overpower me. The latter feeling is new in my experience. I cannot rid myself of it, although I am one of those who have always regarded hatred as a base sentiment. Such love as I can give in this hour is reserved for my country, or rather for the heap of ashes to which Belgium has been reduced." Rolland's answer ran as follows: "Rid yourself of hatred. Neither you nor we should give way to it. Let us guard against hatred even more than we guard against our enemies! You will see at a later date that the tragedy is more terrible than people can realize while it is actually being played. . . . So stupendous is this European drama that we have no right to make human beings responsible for it. It is a convulsion of nature . . . Let us build an ark as did those who were threatened with the deluge. Thus we can save what is left of humanity." Without acrimony, Verhaeren rejected this adjuration. He deliberately chose to remain inspired with hatred, little as he liked the feeling. In *La Belgique sanglante*, he declared that hatred brought a certain solace, although, dedicating his work "to the man I once was," he manifested his yearning for the revival of his former sentiment that the world was a comprehensive whole. Vainly did Rolland return to the charge in a touching letter: "Greatly, indeed, must you have suffered, to be able to hate. But I am confident that in your case such a feeling cannot long endure, for souls like yours would perish in this atmosphere. Justice must be done, but it is not a demand of justice that a whole people should be held responsible

for the crimes of a few hundred individuals. Were there but one just man in Israel, you would have no right to pass judgment upon all Israel. Surely it is impossible for you to doubt that many in Germany and Austria, oppressed and gagged, continue to suffer and struggle. . . . Thousands of innocent persons are being everywhere sacrificed to the crimes of politics! Napoleon was not far wrong when he said: 'Politics are for us what fate was for the ancients.' Never was the destiny of classical days more cruel. Let us refuse, Verhaeren, to make common cause with this destiny. Let us take our stand beside the oppressed, beside all the oppressed, wherever they may dwell. I recognize only two nations on earth, that of those who suffer, and that of those who cause the suffering."

Verhaeren, however, was unmoved. He answered as follows: "If I hate, it is because what I saw, felt, and heard, is hateful . . . I admit that I cannot be just, now that I am filled with sadness and burn with anger. I am not simply standing near the fire, but am actually amid the flames, so that I suffer and weep. I can no otherwise." He remained loyal to hatred, and indeed loyal to the hatred-for-hate of Romain Rolland's Olivier. Notwithstanding this grave divergence of view between Verhaeren and Rolland, the two men continued on terms of friendship and mutual respect. Even in the preface he contributed to Loyson's inflammatory book, *Étes-vous neutre devant le crime,* Verhaeren distinguished between the person and the cause. He was unable, he said, "to espouse Rolland's error," but he would not repudiate

his friendship for Rolland. Indeed, he desired to emphasize its existence, seeing that in France it was already "dangerous to love Romain Rolland."

In this correspondence, as in that with Hauptmann, two strong passions seemed to clash; but the opponents in reality remained out of touch. Here, likewise, the appeal was fruitless. Practically the whole world was given over to hatred, including even the noblest creative artists, and the finest among the sons of men.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EUROPEAN CONSCIENCE

AS on so many previous occasions in his life of action, this man of inviolable faith had issued to the world an appeal for fellowship, and had issued it once more in vain. The writers, the men of science, the philosophers, the artists, all took the side of the country to which they happened to belong; the Germans spoke for Germany, the Frenchmen for France, the Englishmen for England. No one would espouse the universal cause; no one would rise superior to the device, my country right or wrong. In every land, among those of every nation, there were to be found plenty of enthusiastic advocates, persons willing blindly to justify all their country's doings, including its errors and its crimes, to excuse these errors and crimes upon the plea of necessity. There was only one land, the land common to them all, Europe, motherland of all the fatherlands, which found no advocate, no defender. There was only one idea, the most self-evident to a Christian world, which found no spokesman—the idea of ideas, humanity.

During these days, Rolland may well have recalled sacred memories of the time when Leo Tolstoi's letter came to give him a mission in life. Tolstoi had stood

alone in the utterance of his celebrated outcry, "I can no longer keep silence." At that time his country was at war. He arose to defend the invisible rights of human beings, uttering a protest against the command that men should murder their brothers. Now his voice was no longer heard; his place was empty; the conscience of mankind was dumb. To Rolland, the consequent silence, the terrible silence of the free spirit amid the hurly-burly of the slaves, seemed more hateful than the roar of the cannon. Those to whom he had appealed for help had refused to answer the call. The ultimate truth, the truth of conscience, had no organized fellowship to sustain it. No one would aid him in the struggle for the freedom of the European soul, the struggle of truth against falsehood, the struggle of human loving-kindness against frenzied hate. Rolland once again was alone with his faith, more alone than during the bitterest years of solitude.

But Rolland has never been one to resign himself to loneliness. In youth he had already felt that those who are passive while wrong is being done are as criminal as the very wrongdoer. "Ceux qui subissent le mal sont aussi criminels que ceux qui le font." Upon the poet, above all, it seemed to him incumbent to find words for thought, and to vivify the words by action. It is not enough to write ornamental comments upon the history of one's time. The poet must be part of the very being of his time, must fight to make his ideas realize themselves in action. "The elite of the intellect constitutes

an aristocracy which would fain replace the aristocracy of birth. But the aristocracy of intellect is apt to forget that the aristocracy of birth won its privileges with blood. For hundreds of years men have listened to the words of wisdom, but seldom have they seen a sage offering himself up to the sacrifice. If we would inspire others with faith we must show that our own faith is real. Mere words do not suffice." Fame is a sword as well as a laurel crown. Faith imposes obligations. One who had made Jean Christophe utter the gospel of a free conscience, could not, when the world had fashioned his cross, play the part of Peter denying the Lord. He must take up his apostolate, be ready should need arise to face martyrdom. Thus, while almost all the artists of the day, in their "passion d'abdiquer," in their mad desire to shout with the crowd, were not merely extolling force and victory as the masters of the hour, but were actually maintaining that force was the very meaning of civilization, that victory was the vital energy of the world, Rolland stood forth against them all, proclaiming the might of the incorruptible conscience. "Force is always hateful to me," wrote Rolland to Jouve in this decisive hour. "If the world cannot get on without force, it still behooves me to refrain from making terms with force. I must uphold an opposing principle, one which will invalidate the principle of force. Each must play his own part; each must obey his own inward monitor." He did not fail to recognize the titanic nature of the struggle into which he was entering, but the words

he had written in youth still resounded in his memory. "Our first duty is to be great, and to defend greatness on earth."

Just as in those earlier days, when he had wished by means of his dramas to restore faith to his nation, when he had set up the images of the heroes as examples to a petty time, when throughout a decade of quiet effort he had summoned the people towards love and freedom, so now, Rolland set to work alone. He had no party, no newspaper, no influence. He had nothing but his passionate enthusiasm, and that indomitable courage to which the forlorn hope makes an irresistible appeal. Alone he began his onslaught upon the illusions of the multitude, when the European conscience, hunted with scorn and hatred from all countries and all hearts, had taken sanctuary in his heart.

CHAPTER IX

THE MANIFESTOES

THE struggle had to be waged by means of newspaper articles. Since Rolland was attacking prevalent falsehoods, and their public expression in the form of lying phrases, he had perforce to fight them upon their own ground. But the vigor of his ideas, the breath of freedom they conveyed, and the authority of the author's name, made of these articles, manifestoes which spoke to the whole of Europe and aroused a spiritual conflagration. Like electric sparks given off from invisible wires, their energy was liberated in all directions, leading here to terrible explosions of hatred, throwing there a brilliant light into the depths of conscience, in every case producing cordial excitement in its contrasted forms of indignation and enthusiasm. Never before, perhaps, did newspaper articles exercise so stupendous an influence, at once inflammatory and purifying, as was exercised by these two dozen appeals and manifestoes issued in a time of enslavement and confusion by a lonely man whose spirit was free and whose intellect remained unclouded.

From the artistic point of view the essays naturally suffer by comparison with Rolland's other writings, care-

fully considered and fully elaborated. Addressed to the widest possible public, but simultaneously hampered by consideration for the censorship (seeing that to Rolland it was all important that the articles published in the "*Journal de Genève*" should be reproduced in the French press), the ideas had to be presented with meticulous care and yet at the same time to be hastily produced. We find in these writings marvelous and ever-memorable cries of suffering, sublime passages of indignation and appeal. But they are a discharge of passion, so that their stylistic merits vary much. Often, too, they relate to casual incidents. Their essential value lies in their ethical bearing, and here they are of incomparable merit. In relation to Rolland's previous work we find that they display, as it were, a new rhythm. They are characterized by the emotion of one who is aware that he is addressing an audience of many millions. The author was no longer speaking as an isolated individual. For the first time he felt himself to be the public advocate of the invisible Europe.

Will those of a later generation, to whom the essays have been made available in the volumes *Au-dessus de la mêlée* and *Les précurseurs*, be able to understand what they signified to the contemporary world at the time of their publication in the newspapers? The magnitude of a force cannot be measured without taking the resistance into account; the significance of an action cannot be understood without reckoning up the sacrifices it has entailed. To understand the ethical import, the heroic character, of these manifestoes, we must recall to

mind the frenzy of the opening year of the war, the spiritual infection which was devastating Europe, turning the whole continent into a madhouse. It has already become difficult to realize the mental state of those days. We have to remember that maxims which now seem commonplace, as for instance the contention that we must not hold all the individuals of a nation responsible for the outbreak of a war, were then positively criminal, that to utter them was a punishable offense. We must remember that *Au-dessus de la mêlée,* whose trend already seems to us a matter of course, was officially denounced, that its author was ostracised, and that for a considerable period the circulation of the essays was forbidden in France, while numerous pamphlets attacking them secured wide circulation. In connection with these articles we must always evoke the atmospheric environment, must remember the silence of their appeal amid a vasty spiritual silence. To-day, readers are apt to think that Rolland merely uttered self-evident truths, so that we recall Schopenhauer's memorable saying: "On earth, truth is allotted no more than a brief triumph between two long epochs, in one of which it is scouted as paradoxical, while in the other it is despised as commonplace." To-day, for the moment at any rate, we may have entered into a period, when many of Rolland's utterances are accounted commonplace because, since he wrote, they have become the small change of thousands of other writers. Yet there was a day when each of these words seemed to cut like a whip-lash. The excitement they aroused gives us the historic measure

of the need that they should be spoken. The wrath of Rolland's opponents, of which the only remaining record is a pile of pamphlets, bears witness to the heroism of him who was the first to take his stand "above the battle." Let us not forget that it was then the crime of crimes, "de dire ce qui est juste et humain." Men were still so drunken with the fumes of the first bloodshed that they would have been fain, as Rolland himself has phrased it, "to crucify Christ once again should he have risen; to crucify him for saying, Love one another."

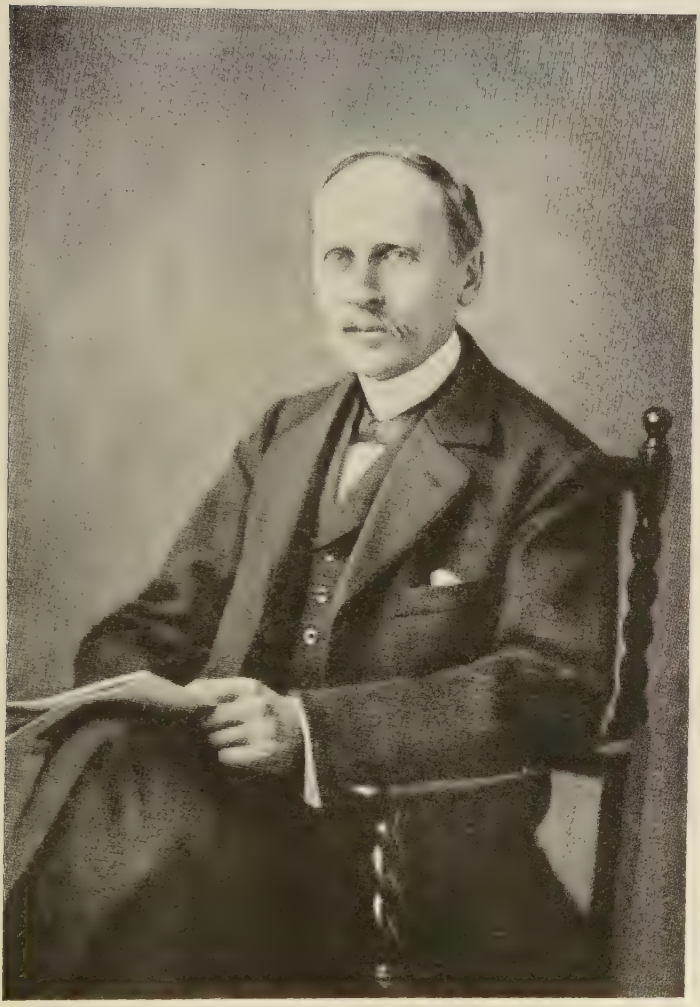
CHAPTER X

ABOVE THE BATTLE

ON September 22, 1914, the essay *Au-dessus de la mêlée* was published in "*Le Journal de Genève.*" After the preliminary skirmish with Gerhart Hauptmann, came this declaration of war against hatred, this foundation stone of the invisible European church. The title, "Above the Battle," has become at once a watchword and a term of abuse; but amid the discordant quarrels of the factions, the essay was the first utterance to sound a clear note of imperturbable justice, bringing solace to thousands.

It is animated by a strange and tragical emotion, resonant of the hour when countless myriads were bleeding and dying, and among them many of Rolland's intimate friends. It is the outpouring of a riven heart, the heart of one who would fain move others, breathing as it does the heroic determination to try conclusions with a world that has fallen a prey to madness. It opens with an ode to the youthful fighters. "O young men that shed your blood for the thirsty earth with so generous a joy! O heroism of the world! What a harvest for destruction to reap under this splendid summer sun! Young men of all nations, brought into conflict by a common ideal, . . . all of you, marching to your deaths, are dear to me . . .

Those years of skepticism and gay frivolity in which we in France grew up are avenged in you . . . Conquerors or conquered, quick or dead, rejoice!" But after this ode to the faithful, to those who believe themselves to be discharging their highest duty, Rolland turns to consider the intellectual leaders of the nations, and apostrophises them thus: "For what are you squandering them, these living riches, these treasures of heroism entrusted to your hands? What ideal have you held up to the devotion of these youths so eager to sacrifice themselves? Mutual slaughter! A European war!" He accuses the leaders of taking cowardly refuge behind an idol they term fate. Those who understood their responsibilities so ill that they failed to prevent the war, inflame and poison it now that it has begun. A terrible picture. In all countries, everything becomes involved in the torrent; among all peoples, there is the same ecstasy for that which is destroying them. "For it is not racial passion alone which is hurling millions of men blindly one against another . . . All the forces of the spirit, of reason, of faith, of poetry, and of science, all have placed themselves at the disposal of the armies in every state. There is not one among the leaders of thought in each country who does not proclaim that the cause of his people is the cause of God, the cause of liberty and of human progress." He mockingly alludes to the preposterous duels between philosophers and men of science; and to the failure of what professed to be the two great internationalist forces of the age, Christianity and socialism, to stand aloof from the fray. "It would seem,



Romain Rolland at the time of writing *Above the Battle*

then, that love of our country can flourish only through the hatred of other countries and the massacre of those who sacrifice themselves in defense of them. There is in this theory a ferocious absurdity, a Neronian dilettantism, which revolts me to the very depths of my being. No! Love of my country does not demand that I should hate and slay those noble and faithful souls who also love theirs, but rather that I should honor them and seek to unite with them for our common good." After some further discussion of the attitude of Christians and of socialists towards the war, he continues: "There was no reason for war between the western nations; French, English, and German, we are all brothers and do not hate one another. The war-preaching press is envenomed by a minority, a minority vitally interested in the diffusion of hatred; but our peoples, I know, ask for peace and liberty, and for that alone." It was a scandal, therefore, that at the outbreak of the war the intellectual leaders should have allowed the purity of their thought to be besmirched. It was monstrous that intelligence should permit itself to be enslaved by the passions of a puerile and absurd policy of race. Never should we forget, in the war now being waged, the essential unity of all our fatherlands. "Humanity is a symphony of great collective souls. He who cannot understand it and love it until he has destroyed a part of its elements, is a barbarian . . . For the finer spirits of Europe, there are two dwelling places: our earthly fatherland, and the City of God. Of the one we are the guests, of the other the builders . . . It is our duty to build the walls of this

city ever higher and stronger, that it may dominate the injustice and the hatred of the nations. Then shall we have a refuge wherein the brotherly and free spirits from out all the world may assemble." This faith in a lofty ideal soars like a sea-mew over the ocean of blood. Rolland is well aware how little hope there is that his words can make themselves audible above the clamor of thirty million warriors. "I know that such thoughts have little chance of being heard to-day. I do not speak to convince. I speak only to solace my conscience. And I know that at the same time I shall solace the hearts of thousands of others who, in all lands, cannot and dare not speak for themselves." As ever, he is on the side of the weak, on the side of the minority. His voice grows stronger, for he knows that he is speaking for the silent multitude.

CHAPTER XI

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST HATRED

THE essay *Au-dessus de la mêlée* was the first stroke of the woodman's axe in the overgrown forest of hatred; thereupon, a roaring echo thundered from all sides, reverberating reluctantly in the newspapers. Undismayed, Rolland resolutely continued his work. He wished to cut a clearing into which a few sunbeams of reason might shine through the gloomy and suffocating atmosphere. His next essays aimed at illuminating an open space of such a character. Especially notable were *Inter Arma Caritas* (October 30, 1914); *Les idoles* (December 4, 1914); *Notre prochain l'ennemi* (March 15, 1915); *Le meutre des élites* (June 14, 1915). These were attempts to give a voice to the silent. "Let us help the victims! It is true that we cannot do very much. In the everlasting struggle between good and evil, the balance is unequal. We require a century for the upbuilding of that which a day destroys. Nevertheless, the frenzy lasts no more than a day, and the patient labor of reconstruction is our daily bread. This work goes on even during an hour when the world is perishing around us."

The poet had at length come to understand his task.

It is useless to attack the war directly. Reason can effect nothing against the elemental forces. But he regards it as his predestined duty to combat throughout the war everything that the passions of men lead them to undertake for the deliberate increase of horror, to combat the spiritual poison of the war. The most atrocious feature of the present struggle, one which distinguishes it from all previous wars, is this deliberate poisoning. That which in earlier days was accepted with simple resignation as a disastrous visitation like the plague, was now presented in a heroic light, as a sign of "the grandeur of the age." An ethic of force, an ethic of destruction, was being preached. The mass struggle of the nations was being purposely inflamed to become the mass hatred of individuals. Rolland, therefore, was not, as many have supposed, attacking the war; he was attacking the ideology of the war, the artificial idolization of brutality. As far as the individual was concerned, he attacked the readiness to accept a collective morality constructed solely for the duration of the war; he attacked the surrender of conscience in face of the prevailing universalization of falsehood; he attacked the suspension of inner freedom which was advocated until the war should be over.

His words, therefore, are not directed against the masses, not against the peoples. These know not what they do; they are deceived; they are dumb driven cattle. The diffusion of lying has made it easy for them to hate. "Il est si commode de haïr sans comprendre." The fault lies with the inciters, with the manufacturers of lies,

with the intellectuals. They are guilty, seven times guilty, because, thanks to their education and experience, they cannot fail to know the truth which nevertheless they repudiate; because from weakness, and in many cases from calculation, they have surrendered to the current of uninstructed opinion, instead of using their authority to deflect this current into better channels. Of set purpose, instead of defending the ideals they formerly espoused, the ideals of humanity and international unity, they have revived the ideas of the Spartans and of the Homeric heroes, which have as little place in our time as have spears and plate-armor in these days of machine-gun warfare. Heretofore, to the great spirits of all time, hatred has seemed a base and contemptible accompaniment of war. The thoughtful among the non-combatants put it away from them with loathing; the warriors rejected the sentiment upon grounds of chivalry. Now, hatred is not merely supported with all the arguments of logic, science, and poesy; but is actually, in defiance of gospel teaching, raised to a place among the moral duties, so that every one who resists the feeling of collective hatred is branded as a traitor. Against these enemies of the free spirit, Rolland takes up his parable: "Not only have they done nothing to lessen reciprocal misunderstanding; not only have they done nothing to limit the diffusion of hate; on the contrary, with few exceptions, they have done everything in their power to make hatred more widespread and more venomous. In large part, this war is their war. By their murderous ideologies they have led thousands astray. With criminal self-confidence, unteachable in their arrogance, they have

driven millions to death, sacrificing their fellows to the phantoms which they, the intellectuals, have created." The persons to whom blame attaches are those who know, or who might have known; but who, from sloth, cowardice, or weakness, from desire for fame or for some other personal advantage, have given themselves over to lying.

The hatred breathed by the intellectuals was a falsehood. Had it been a truth, had it been a genuine passion, those who were inspired with this feeling would have ceased talking and would themselves have taken up arms. Most people are moved either by hatred or by love, not by abstract ideas. For this reason, the attempt to sow dissension among millions of unknown individuals, the attempt to "perpetuate" hatred, was a crime against the spirit rather than against the flesh. It was a deliberate falsification to include leaders and led, drivers and driven, in a single category; to generalize Germany as an integral object for hatred. We must join one fellowship or the other, that of the truthtellers or that of the liars, that of the men of conscience or that of the men of phrase. Just as in *Jean Christophe*, Rolland, in order to show forth the universally human fellowship, had distinguished between the true France and the false, between the old Germany and the new; so now in wartime did he draw attention to the ominous resemblance between the war fanatics in both camps, and to the heroic isolation of those who were above the battle in all the belligerent lands. Thus did he endeavor to fulfill Tolstoi's dictum, that it is the function of the imaginative writer to strengthen the ties that bind men together. In

Rolland's comedy *Liluli*, the "cerveaux enchaînés," dressed in various national uniforms, dance the same Indian war-dance under the lash of Patriotism, the negro slave-driver. There is a terrible resemblance between the German professors and those of the Sorbonne. All of them turn the same logical somersaults; all join in the same chorus of hate.

But the fellowship to which Rolland wishes to draw our attention, is the fellowship of solace. It is true that the humanizing forces are not so well organized as the forces of destruction. Free opinion is gagged, whereas falsehood bellows through the megaphones of the press. Truth has to be sought out with painful labor, for the state makes it its business to hide truth. Nevertheless, those who search perseveringly can discover truth among all nations and among all races. In these essays, Rolland gives many examples, drawn equally from French and from German sources, showing that even in the trenches, nay, that especially in the trenches, thousands upon thousands are animated with brotherly feelings. He publishes letters from German soldiers, side by side with letters from French soldiers, all couched in the same phraseology of human friendliness. He tells of the women's organizations for helping the enemy, and shows that amid the cruelty of arms the same lovingkindness is displayed on both sides. He publishes poems from either camp, poems which exhale a common sentiment. Just as in his *Vie des hommes illustres* he had wished to show the sufferers of the world that they were not alone, but that the greatest minds of all epochs were with them,

so now does he attempt to convince those who amid the general madness are apt to regard themselves as outcasts because they do not share the fire and fury of the newspapers and the professors, that they have everywhere silent brothers of the spirit. Once more, as of old, he wishes to unite the invisible community of the free. "I feel the same joy when I find the fragile and valiant flowers of human pity piercing the icy crust of hatred that covers Europe, as we feel in these chilly March days when we see the first flowers appear above the soil. They show that the warmth of life persists below the surface, and that soon nothing will prevent its rising again." Undismayed he continues on his "humble pélérinage," endeavoring "to discover, beneath the ruins, the hearts of those who have remained faithful to the old ideal of human brotherhood. What a melancholy joy it is to come to their aid." For the sake of this consolation, for the sake of this hope, he gives a new significance even to war, which he has hated and dreaded from early childhood. "To war we owe one painful benefit, in that it has served to bring together those of all nations who refuse to share the prevailing sentiments of national hatred. It has steeled their energies, has inspired them with an indefatigable will. How mistaken are those who imagine that the ideas of human brotherhood have been stifled . . . Not for a moment do I doubt the coming unity of the European fellowship. That unity will be realized. The war is but its baptism of blood."

Thus does the good Samaritan, the healer of souls, endeavor to bring to the despairing that hope which is the

bread of life. Perchance Rolland speaks with a confidence that runs somewhat in advance of his innermost convictions. But he only who realized the intense yearnings of the innumerable persons who at that date were imprisoned in their respective fatherlands, barred in the cages of the censorships, he alone can realize the value to such poor captives of Rolland's manifestoes of faith, words free from hatred, bringing at length a message of brotherhood.

CHAPTER XII

OPPONENTS

FROM the first, Rolland knew perfectly well that in a time when party feeling runs high, no task can be more ungrateful than that of one who advocates impartiality. "The combatants are to-day united in one thing only, in their hatred for those who refuse to join in any hymn of hate. Whoever does not share the common delirium, is suspect. And nowadays, when justice cannot spare the time for thorough investigation, every suspect is considered tantamount to a traitor. He who undertakes in wartime to defend peace on earth, must realize that he is staking his faith, his name, his tranquillity, his repute, and even his friendships. But of what value would be a conviction on behalf of which a man would take no risks?" Rolland was likewise aware that the most dangerous of all positions is that between the fronts, but this certainty of danger was but a tonic to his conscience. "If it be really needful, as the proverb assures us, to prepare for war in time of peace, it is no less needful to prepare for peace in time of war. In my view, the latter role is assigned to those who stand outside the struggle, and whose mental life has brought them into unusually close contact with the world-all. I speak of the members of that little lay

church, of those who have been exceptionally well able to maintain their faith in the unity of human thought, of those for whom all men are sons of the same father. If it should chance that we are reviled for holding this conviction, the reviling is in truth an honor to us, and we may be satisfied to know that we shall earn the approbation of posterity."

It is plain that Rolland is forearmed against opposition. Nevertheless, the fierceness of the onslaughts exceeded all expectation. The first rumblings of the storm came from Germany. The passage in the *Letter to Gerhart Hauptmann*, "are you the sons of Goethe or of Attila," and similar utterances, aroused angry echoes. A dozen or so professors and scribblers hastened to "chastise" French arrogance. In the columns of "*Die Deutsche Rundschau*," a narrow-minded pangerman disclosed the great secret that under the mask of neutrality *Jean Christophe* had been a most dangerous French attack upon the German spirit.

French champions were no less eager to enter the lists as soon as the publication of the essay *Au-dessus de la mêlée* was reported. Difficult as it seems to realize the fact to-day, the French newspapers were forbidden to reprint this manifesto, but fragments became known to the public in the attacks wherein Rolland was pilloried as an antipatriot. Professors at the Sorbonne and historians of renown did not shrink from leveling such accusations. Soon the campaign was systematized. Newspaper articles were followed by pamphlets, and ultimately by a large volume from the pen of a carpet

hero. This book was furnished with a thousand proofs, with photographs, and quotations; it was a complet dossier, avowedly intended to supply materials for a prosecution. There was no lack of the basest calumnies. It was asserted that since the beginning of the war Rolland had joined the German society "Neues Vaterland"; that he was a contributor to German newspapers; that his American publisher was a German agent. In one pamphlet he was accused of deliberately falsifying dates. Yet more incriminatory charges could be read between the lines. With the exception of a few newspapers of advanced tendencies and comparatively small circulation, the whole of the French press combined to boycott Rolland. Not one of the Parisian journals ventured to publish a reply to the charges. A professor triumphantly announced: "Cet auteur ne se lit plus en France." His former associates withdrew in alarm from the tainted member of the flock. One of his oldest friends, the "ami de la première heure," to whom Rolland had dedicated an earlier work, deserted at this decisive hour, and canceled the publication of a book upon Rolland which was already in type. The French government likewise began to watch Rolland closely, dispatching agents to collect "materials." A number of "defeatist" trails were obviously aimed in part at Rolland, whose essay was publicly stigmatized as "abominable" by Lieutenant Mornet, the tiger of these prosecutions. Nothing but the authority of his name, the inviolability of his public life, and the fact that he was a lonely fighter (this making it impossible to show

that he had any suspect associations), frustrated the well-prepared plan to put Rolland in the dock among adventurers and petty spies.

All this lunacy is incomprehensible unless we reconstruct the forcing-house atmosphere of that year. It is difficult to-day, even from a study of all the pamphlets and books bearing on the question, to grasp the way in which Rolland's fellow-countrymen had become convinced that he was an antipatriot. From his own writings, it is impossible for the most fanciful brain to extract the ingredients for a "cas Rolland." From a study of his own writings alone it is impossible to understand the frenzy felt by all the intellectuals of France towards this lonely exile, who tranquilly and with a full sense of responsibility continued to develop his ideas.

In the eyes of the patriots, Rolland's first crime was that he openly discussed the moral problems of the war. "On ne discute pas la patrie." The first axiom of war ethics is that those who cannot or will not shout with the crowd must hold their peace. Soldiers must never be taught to think; they must only be incited to hate. A lie which promotes enthusiasm is worth more in wartime than the best of truths. In imitation of the principles of the Catholic church, reflection, doubt, is deemed a crime against the infallible dogma of the fatherland. It was enough that Rolland should wish to turn things over in his mind, instead of unquestioningly affirming the current political theses. Thereby he abandoned the "attitude française"; thereby he was stamped as "neutre." In those days "neutre" was a good rime to "traître."

Rolland's second crime was that he desired to be just to all mankind, that he continued to regard the enemy as human beings, that among them he distinguished between guilty and not guilty, that he had as much compassion for German sufferers as for French, that he did not hesitate to refer to the Germans as brothers. The dogma of patriotism prescribed that for the duration of the war the feelings of humanitarianism should be stifled. Justice should be put away on the top shelf, to keep company there, until victory had been secured, with the divine command, Thou shalt not kill. One of the pamphlets against Rolland bears as its motto, "Pendant une guerre tout ce qu'on donne de l'amour à l'humanité, on le vole à la patrie"—though it must be observed that from the outlook of those who share Rolland's views, the order of the terms might well be inverted.

The third crime, the offense which seemed most unpardonable of all, and the one most dangerous to the state, was that Rolland refused to regard a military victory as likely to furnish the elixir of morality, to promote spiritual regeneration, to bring justice upon earth. Rolland's sin lay in holding that a just and bloodless peace, a complete reconciliation, a fraternal union of the European nations, would be more fruitful of blessing than an enforced peace, which could only sow the dragon's teeth of hatred and of new wars. In France at this date, those who wished to fight the war to a finish, to fight until the enemy had been utterly crushed, coined the term "defeatist" for those who desired peace to be based upon a reasonable understanding. Thus was

paralleled the German terminology, which spoke of "Flaumachern" (slackers) and of "Schmachfriede" (shameful peace). Rolland, who had devoted the whole of his life to the elucidation of moral laws higher than those of force, was stigmatized as one who would poison the morale of the armies, as "l'initiateur du défaitisme." To the militarists, he seemed to be the last representative of "dying Renanism," to be the center of a moral power, and for this reason they endeavored to represent his ideas as nonsensical, to depict him as a Frenchman who desired the defeat of France. Yet his words stood unchallenged: "I wish France to be loved. I wish France to be victorious, not through force; not solely through right (even that would be too harsh); but through the superiority of a great heart. I wish that France were strong enough to fight without hatred; strong enough to regard even those whom she must strike down, as her brothers, as erring brothers, to whom she must extend her fullest sympathy as soon as she has put it beyond their power to injure her." Rolland made no attempt to answer even the most calumnious of attacks. He quietly let the invectives pass, knowing that the thought which he felt himself commissioned to announce, was inviolable and imperishable. Never had he fought men, but only ideas. The hostile ideas, in this case, had long since been answered by the figures of his own creation. They had been answered by Olivier, the free Frenchman who hated hatred; by Faber, the Girondist, to whom conscience stood higher than the arguments of the patriots; by Adam Lux, who compas-

sionately asked his fanatical opponent, "N'es tu pas fatigué de ta haine"; by Teulier, and by all the great characters through whom during more than two decades he had been giving expression to his outlook upon the struggle of the day. He was unperturbed at standing alone against almost the entire nation. He recalled Chamfort's saying, "There are times when public opinion is the worst of all possible opinions." The immeasurable wrath, the hysterical frenzy of his opponents, confirmed his conviction that he was right, for he felt that their clamor for force betrayed their sense of the weakness of their own arguments. Smilingly he contemplated their artificially inflamed anger, addressing them in the words of his own Clerambault: "You say that yours is the better way? The only good way? Very well, take your own path, and leave me to take mine. I make no attempt to compel you to follow me. I merely show you which way I am going. What are you so excited about? Perhaps at the bottom of your hearts you are afraid that my way is the right one?"

CHAPTER XIII

FRIENDS

AS soon as he had uttered his first words, a void formed round this brave man. As Verhaeren finely phrased it, he positively loved to encounter danger, whereas most people shun danger. His oldest friends, those who had known his writings and his character from youth upwards, left him in the lurch; prudent folk quietly turned their backs on him; newspaper editors and publishers refused him hospitality. For the moment, Rolland seemed to be alone. But, as he had written in *Jean Christophe,* "A great soul is never alone. Abandoned by friends, such a one makes new friends, and surrounds himself with a circle of that affection of which he is himself full."

Necessity, the touchstone of conscience, had deprived him of friends, but had also brought him friends. It is true that their voices were hardly audible amid the clangor of the opponents. The war-makers had control of all the channels of publicity. They roared hatred through the megaphones of the press. Friends could do no more than give expression to a few cautious words in such petty periodicals as could slip through the meshes of the censorship. Enemies formed a compact mass, flowing to the attack in a huge wave (whose waters were

ultimately to be dispersed in the morass of oblivion); his friends crystallized slowly and secretly around his ideas, but they were steadfast. His enemies were a regiment advancing fiercely to the attack at the word of command; his friends were a fellowship, working tranquilly, and united only through love.

The friends in Paris had the hardest task. It was barely possible for them to communicate with him openly. Half of their letters to him and half of his replies were lost on the frontier. As from a beleaguered fortress, they hailed the liberator, the man who was freely proclaiming to the world the ideals which they were forbidden to utter. Their only possible way of defending their ideas was to defend the man. In Rolland's own fatherland, Amédée Dunois, Fernand Desprès, Georges Pioch, Renaitour, Rouanet, Jacques Mesnil, Gaston Thiesson, Marcel Martinet, and Sévérine, boldly championed him against calumny. A valiant woman, Marcelle Capy, raised the standard, naming her book *Une voix de femme dans la mêlée*. Separated from him by the blood-stained sea, they looked towards him as towards a distant lighthouse upon the rock, and showed their brothers the signal of hope.

In Geneva there formed round him a group of young writers, disciples and friends, winning strength from his strength. P. J. Jouve author of *Vous êtes des hommes* and *Danse des morts*, glowing with anger and with love of goodness, suffering intensely at witnessing the injustice of the world, Olivier redivivus, gave expression in his poems to his hatred for force. René Arcos,

who like Jouve had realized all the horror of war and who hated war no less intensely, had a clearer comprehension of the dramatic moment, was more thoughtful than Jouve, but equally simple and kindhearted. Arcos extolled the European ideal; Charles Baudouin the ideal of eternal goodness. Franz Masereel, the Belgian artist, developed his humanist plaint in a series of magnificent woodcuts. Guilbeaux, zealot for the social revolution, ever ready to fight like a gamecock against authority, founded his monthly review "demain," which was a faithful representative of the European spirit for a time, until it succumbed because of its passion for the Russian revolution. Charles Baudouin founded the monthly review, "Le Carmel," providing a city of refuge for the persecuted European spirit, and a platform upon which the poets and imaginative writers of all lands could assemble under the banner of humanity. Jean Debrit in "La Feuille" combated the partisanship of the Latin Swiss press and attacked the war. Claude de Maguet founded "Les Tablettes," which, through the boldness of its contributors and through the drawings of Masereel, became the most vigorous periodical in Switzerland. A little oasis of independence came into existence, and hither the breezes from all quarters wafted greetings from the distance. Here alone was it possible to breathe a European air.

The most remarkable feature of this circle was that, thanks to Rolland, enemy brethren were not excluded from spiritual fellowship. Whereas everywhere else people were infected with the hysteria of mass hatred

or were terrified lest they should expose themselves to suspicion, and therefore avoided their sometime intimates of enemy countries like the pestilence should they chance to meet them in the streets of some neutral city, at a time when relatives were afraid to exchange letters of enquiry regarding the life or death of those of their own blood, Rolland would not for a moment deny his German friends. Never, indeed, had he shown more love to those among them who remained faithful, at an epoch when to love them was dangerous. He made himself known to them in public, and wrote to them freely. His words concerning these friendships will never be forgotten: "Yes, I have German friends; just as I have French, English, and Italian friends; just as I have friends among the members of every race. They are my wealth, which I am proud of, and which I seek to preserve. If a man has been so fortunate as to encounter loyal souls, persons with whom he can share his most intimate thoughts, persons with whom he is connected by brotherly ties, these ties are sacred, and the hour of trial is the last of hours in which they should be rent asunder. How cowardly would be the refusal to recognize these friends, in deference to the impudent demand of a public opinion which has no rights over our feelings. . . . How painful, how tragical, these friendships are at such a moment, the letters will show when they are published. But it is precisely by means of such friendships that we can defend ourselves against hatred, more murderous than war, for it poisons the

wounds of war, and harms the hater equally with the object of hate."

Immeasurable is the debt which friends and numberless unseen companions in adversity owe to Rolland for his brave and free attitude. He set an example to all those who, though they shared his sentiments, were isolated in obscurity, and who needed some such point of crystallization before their thoughts and feelings could be consolidated. It was above all for those who were not yet sure of themselves that this archetypal personality provided so splendid a stimulus. Rolland's steadfastness put younger men to shame. In his company we were stronger, freer, more genuine, more unprejudiced. Human lovingkindness, transfigured by his ardor, radiated like a flame. What bound us together was not that we chanced to think alike, but a passionate exaltation, which often became a positive fanaticism for brotherhood. We foregathered in defiance of public opinion and in defiance of the laws of the belligerent states, exchanging confidences without reserve; our comradeship exposed us to all sorts of suspicions; these things served but to draw us closer together, and in many memorable hours we felt with a veritable intoxication the unprecedented quality of our friendship. We were but a couple of dozen who thus came together in Switzerland; Frenchmen, Germans, Russians, Austrians, and Italians. We few were the only ones among the hundreds of millions who could look one another in the face without hatred, exchanging our innermost thoughts.

This little troop was all that then constituted Europe. Our unity, a grain of dust in the storm which was raging through the world, was perhaps the seed of the coming fraternity. How strong, how happy, how grateful did we often feel. For without Rolland, without the genius of his friendship, without the connecting link constituted by his disposition, we should never have attained to freedom and security. Each of us loved him in a different way, and all of us regarded him with equal veneration. To the French, he was the purest spiritual expression of their homeland; to us, he was the wonderful counterpart of the best in our own world. In this circle that formed round Rolland there was the sense of fellowship which has always characterized a religious community in the making. The hostility between our respective nations, and the consciousness of danger, fired our friendship to the pitch of exaggeration; while the example of the bravest and freest man we had ever known, brought out all that was best in us. When we were near him, we felt ourselves to be in the heart of true Europe. Whoever was able to know Rolland's inmost essence, acquired, as in the ancient saga, new energy for the wrestle with brute force.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LETTERS

ALL that Rolland gave in those days to his friends and collaborators of the European fellowship, all that he gave by his immediate proximity, was but a part of his nature. For beyond these personal limits, he diffused a consolidating and helpful influence. Whoever turned to him with a question, an anxiety, a distress, or a suggestion, received an answer. In hundreds upon hundreds of letters he spread the message of brotherhood, splendidly fulfilling the vow he had made a quarter of a century earlier, at the time when Tolstoi's letter had brought him spiritual healing. In Rolland's self there had come to life, not only Jean Christophe the believer, but likewise Leo Tolstoi, the great consoler.

Unknown to the world, he shouldered a stupendous burden during the five years of the war. For whoever found himself in revolt against the time and in conflict with the prevailing miasma of falsehood, whoever needed counsel in a matter of conscience, whoever wanted aid, knew where he could turn for what he sought. Who else in Europe inspired such confidence? The unknown friends of Jean Christophe, the nameless brothers of

Olivier, hidden in out-of-the-way parts, knowing no one to whom they could whisper their doubts—in whom could they better confide than in this man who had first brought them tidings of goodness? They sent him requests, submitted proposals, disclosed the turmoil of their consciences. Soldiers wrote to him from the trenches; mothers penned letters to him in secret. Many of the writers did not venture to give their names, merely wishing to send a message of sympathy and to inscribe themselves citizens of that invisible "republic of free souls" which the author of *Jean Christophe* had founded amid the warring nations. Rolland accepted the infinite labor of being the centralizing point and administrator of all these distresses and plaints, of being the recipient of all these confessions, of being the consoler of a world divided against itself. Wherever there was a stirring of European, of universally human sentiment, Rolland did his best to receive and sustain it; he was the crossways towards which all these roads converged. At the same time he was continuously in communication with leading representatives of the European faith, with those of all lands who had remained loyal to the free spirit. He studied the periodicals of the day for messages of reconciliation. Wherever a man or a work was devoted to the reconsolidation of Europe, Rolland's help was ready.

These hundreds and thousands of letters combine to form an ethical achievement such as has not been paralleled by any previous writer. They brought happiness to countless solitary souls, strength to the wavering, hope

to the despairing. Never was the poet's mission more nobly fulfilled. Considered as works of art, these letters, many of which have already been published, are among the finest and maturest of Rolland's literary creations. To bring solace is the most intimate purpose of his art. Here, when speaking as man to man he can give himself without stint, he displays a rhythmical energy, an ardor of lovingkindness, which makes many of the letters rank with the loveliest poems of our time. The sensitive modesty which often makes him reserved in conversation, was no longer a hindrance. The letters are frank confessions, wherein his free spirit converses freely with its fellows, disclosing the author's goodness, his passionate emotion. That which is so generously poured forth for the benefit of unknown correspondents, is the most intimate essence of his nature. Like Colas Breugnon he can say: "Voilà mon plus beau travail: les âmes que j'ai sculptées."

CHAPTER XV

THE COUNSELOR

DURING these years, many people, young for the most part, came to Rolland for advice in matters of conscience. They asked whether, seeing that their convictions were opposed to war, they ought to refuse military service, in accordance with the teaching of Tolstoi, and following the example of the conscientious objectors; or whether they should obey the biblical precept, Resist not evil. They enquired whether they should take an open stand against the injustices committed by their country, or whether they should endure in silence. Others besought spiritual counsel in their troubles of conscience. All who came seemed to imagine that they were coming to one who possessed a maxim, a fixed principle concerning conduct in relation to the war, a wonder-working moral elixir which he could dispense in suitable doses.

To all these enquiries Rolland returned the same answer: "Follow your conscience. Seek out your own truth and realize it. There is no ready-made truth, no rigid formula, which one person can hand over to another. Each must create truth for himself, according to his own model. There is no other rule of moral con-

duct than that a man should seek his own light and should be guided by it even against the world. He who lays down his arms and accepts imprisonment, does rightly when he follows the inner light, and is not prompted by vanity or by simple imitativeness. He likewise is right, who takes up arms with no intention to use them in earnest, who thus cheats the state that he may propagate his ideal and save his inner freedom—provided always he acts in accordance with his own nature." Rolland declared that the one essential was that a man should believe in his own faith. He approved the patriot desirous of dying for his country, and he approved the anarchist who claimed freedom from all governmental authority. There was no other maxim than that of faith in one's own faith. The only man who did wrong, the only man who acted falsely, was he who allowed himself to be swept away by another's ideals, he who, influenced by the intoxication of the crowd, performed actions which conflicted with his own nature. A typical instance was that of Ludwig Frank, the socialist, the advocate of a Franco-German understanding, who, deciding to serve his party instead of serving his own ideal, volunteered at the outbreak of the war, and died for the ideals of his opponent, for the ideals of militarism.

There is but one truth, such was Rolland's answer to all. The only truth is that which a man finds within himself and recognizes as his very own. Any other would-be truth is self-deception. What appears to be egoism, serves humanity. "He who would be useful to

others, must above all remain free. Even love avails nothing, if the one who loves be a slave." Death for the fatherland is worthless unless he who sacrifices himself believes in his fatherland as in a god. To evade military service is cowardice in one who lacks courage to proclaim himself a sanspatrie. There are no true ideas other than those which spring from inner experience; there are no deeds worth doing other than those which are the outcome of fully responsible reflection. He who would serve mankind, must not blindly obey the arguments of a stranger. We cannot regard as a moral act anything which is done simply through imitativeness, or in consequence of another's persuasion, or (as almost universally under modern war stresses) through the suggestive influence of mass illusion. "A man's first duty is to be himself, to remain himself, at the cost of self-sacrifice."

Rolland did not fail to recognize the difficulty, the rarity, of such free acts. He recalled Emerson's saying: "Nothing is more rare in any man, than an act of his own." But was not the unfree, untrue thinking of the masses, the inertia of the mass conscience, the prime cause of our present troubles? Would the war between European brethren have ever broken out if every townsman, every countryman, every artist, had looked within to enquire whether the mines of Morocco and the swamps of Albania were truly precious to him? Would there have been a war if every one had asked himself whether he really hated his brothers across the frontier as vehemently as the newspapers and the professional poli-

ticians would have him believe? The herd instinct, the pattering of others' arguments, a blind enthusiasm on behalf of sentiments that were never truly felt, could alone render such a catastrophe possible. Nothing but the freedom of the largest possible number of individuals can save us from the recurrence of such a tragedy; nothing can save us but that conscience should be an individual and not a collective affair. That which each one recognizes to be true and good for himself, is true and good for mankind. "What the world needs before all to-day is free souls and strong characters. For to-day all paths seem to lead to an accentuation of herd life. We see a passive subordination to the church, the intolerant traditionalism of the fatherlands, socialist dreams of a despotic unity . . . Mankind needs men who can show that the very persons who love mankind can, whenever necessary, declare war against the collective impulse."

Rolland therefore refuses to act as authority for others. He demands that every one should recognize the supreme authority of his own conscience. Truth cannot be taught; it must be lived. He who thinks clearly, and having done so acts freely, produces conviction, not by words but by his nature. Rolland has been able to help an entire generation, because from the height of his loneliness he has shown the world how a man makes an idea live for all time by loyalty to that which he has recognized as truth. Rolland's counsel was not word but deed; it was the moral simplicity of his own example.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SOLITARY

ROLLAND'S life was now in touch with the life of the whole world. It radiated influence in all directions. Yet how lonely was this man during the five years of voluntary exile. He dwelt apart at Villeneuve by the lake of Geneva. His little room resembled that in which he had lived in Paris. Here, too, were piles of books and pamphlets; here was a plain deal table; here was a piano, the companion of his hours of relaxation. His days, and often his nights were spent at work. He seldom went for a walk, and rarely received a visitor, for his friends were cut off from him, and even his parents and his sister could only get across the frontier about once a year. But the worst feature of this loneliness was that it was loneliness in a glass house. He was continually spied upon: his least words were listened for by eavesdroppers; provocative agents sought him out, proclaiming themselves revolutionists and sympathizers. Every letter was read before it reached him; every word he spoke over the telephone was recorded; every interview was kept under obsrvation. Romain Rolland in his glass prison-house was the captive of unseen powers.

Rolland's Mother

It seems hardly credible to-day that during the last two years of the war Romain Rolland, to whose words the world is now eager to listen, should have had no facility for expressing his ideas in the newspapers, no publisher for his books, no possibility of printing anything beyond an occasional review article. His homeland had repudiated him; he was the "fuoruscito" of the middle ages, was placed under a ban. The more unmistakably he proclaimed his spiritual independence, the less did he find himself regarded as a welcome guest in Switzerland. He was surrounded by an atmosphere of secret suspicion. By degrees, open attacks had been replaced by a more dangerous form of persecution. A gloomy silence was established around his name and works. His earlier companions had more and more withdrawn from him. Many of the new friendships had been dissolved, for the younger men in especial were devoting their interest to political questions instead of to things of the spirit. The more stormy the outside world, the more oppressive the stillness of Rolland's existence. He had no wife as helpmate. What to him was the best of all companionship, the companionship of his own writings, was now unattainable, for he had no freedom of publication in France. His country was closed to him, his place of refuge was beset with a hundred eyes. Most homeless among the homeless, he lived, as his beloved Beethoven had said, "in the air," lived in the realm of the ideal, in invisible Europe. Nothing shows better the energy of his living goodness

than that he was no whit embittered by his experience, and that the ordeal has served but to strengthen his faith. For this utter solitude among men was a true fellowship with mankind.

CHAPTER XVII

THE DIARY

THERE was, however, one companion with whom Rolland could hold converse daily—his inner consciousness. Day by day, from the outbreak of the war, Rolland recorded his sentiments, his secret thoughts, and the messages he received from afar. His very silence was an impassioned conversation with the time spirit. During these years, volume was added to volume, until by the end of the war, they totaled no less than twenty-seven. When he was able to return to France, he naturally hesitated to take this confidential document to a land where the censors would have a legal right to study every detail of his private thoughts. He has shown a page here and there to intimate friends, but the whole remains as a legacy to posterity, for those who will be able to contemplate the tragedy of our days with purer and more dispassionate views.

It is impossible for us to do more than surmise the real nature of this document, but our feelings suggest to us that it must be a spiritual history of the epoch, and one of incomparable value. Rolland's best and freest thoughts come to him when he is writing. His most inspired moments are those when he is most personal.

Consequently, just as the letters taken in their entirety may be regarded as artistically superior to the published essays, so beyond question his diary must be a human document supplying a most admirable and pure-minded commentary upon the war. Only to the children of a later day will it become plain that what Rolland so ably showed in the case of Beethoven and the other heroes, applies with equal force to himself. They will learn at what a cost of personal disillusionment his message of hope and confidence was delivered to the world; they will learn that an idealism which brought help to thousands, and which wiseacres have often derided as trivial and commonplace, sprang from the darkest abysses of suffering and loneliness, and was rendered possible solely by the heroism of a soul in travail. All that has been disclosed to us is the fact of his faith. These manuscript volumes contain a record of the ransom with which that faith was purchased, of the payments demanded from day to day by the inexorable creditor we name Life.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FORERUNNERS AND EMPEDOCLES

ROLLAND opened his campaign against hatred almost immediately after the war began. For more than a year he continued to deliver his message in opposition to the frenzied screams of rancor arising from all lands. His efforts proved futile. The war-current rose yet higher, the stream being fed by new and ever new blood flowing from innocent victims. Again and again some additional country became involved in the carnage. At length, as the clamor still grew louder, Rolland paused for a moment to take breath. He felt that it would be madness were he to continue the attempt to outcry the cries of so many madmen.

After the publication of *Au-dessus de la mêlée*, Rolland withdrew from public participation in the controversies with which the essays had been concerned. He had spoken his word; he had sown the wind and had reaped the whirlwind. He was neither weary in well-doing nor was he weak in faith, but he realized that it was useless to speak to a world which would not listen. In truth he had lost the sublime illusion with which he had been animated at the outset, the belief that men

desire reason and truth. To his intelligence now grown clearer it was plain that men dread truth more than anything else in the world. He began, therefore, to settle accounts with his own mind by writing a satirical romance, and by other imaginative creations, while continuing his vast private correspondence. Thus for a time he was out of the hurlyburly. But after a year of silence, when the crimson flood continued to swell, and when falsehood was raging more furiously than ever, he felt it his duty to reopen the campaign. "We must repeat the truth again and again," said Goethe to Schermann, "for the error with which truth has to contend is continually being repreached, not by individuals, but by the mass." There was so much loneliness in the world that it had become necessary to form new ties. Signs of discontent and revolt in the various lands were more plentiful. More numerous, too, were the brave men in active revolt against the fate which was being forced on them. Rolland felt that it was incumbent upon him to give what support he could to these dispersed fighters, and to inspirit them for the struggle.

In the first essay of the new series, *La route en lacets qui monte*, Rolland explained the position he had reached in December, 1916. He wrote: "If I have kept silence for a year, it is not because the faith to which I gave expression in *Above the Battle* has been shaken (it stands firmer than ever); but I am well assured that it is useless to speak to him who will not hearken. Facts alone will speak, with tragical insistence; facts alone will be able to penetrate the thick wall of obstinacy,

pride, and falsehood with which men have surrounded their minds because they do not wish to see the light. But we, as between brothers of all the nations; as between those who have known how to defend their moral freedom, their reason, and their faith in human solidarity; as between minds which continue to hope amid silence, oppression, and grief—we do well to exchange, as this year draws to a close, words of affection and solace. We must convince one another that during the blood-drenched night the light is still burning, that it never has been and never will be extinguished. In the abyss of suffering into which Europe is plunged, those who wield the pen must be careful never to add an additional pang to the mass of pangs already endured, and never to pour new reasons for hatred into the burning flood of hate. Two ways remain open for those rare free spirits which, athwart the mountain of crimes and follies, are endeavoring to break a trail for others, to find for themselves an egress. Some are courageously attempting in their respective lands to make their fellow-countrymen aware of their own faults. . . . My task is different, for it is to remind the hostile brethren of Europe, not of their worst aspects but of their best, to recall to them reasons for hoping that there will one day be a wiser and more loving humanity."

The essays of the new series appeared, for the most part, in various minor reviews, seeing that the more influential and widely circulated periodicals had long since closed their columns to Rolland's pen. When we study them as a whole, in the collective volume entitled *Les*

précurseurs, we realize that they emit a new tone. Anger has been replaced by intense compassion, this corresponding to the change which had taken place at the fighting front. In all the armies, during the third year of the war, the fanatical impetus of the opening phases had vanished, and the men were now animated by a tranquil but stubborn sentiment of duty. Rolland is perhaps even more impassioned and more revolutionary in his outlook, and yet the essays are characterized by greater gentleness than of old. What he writes is no longer at grips with the war, but seems to soar above the war. His gaze is fixed upon the distance; his mind ranges down the centuries in search of like experiences; looking for consolation, he endeavors to discover a meaning in the meaningless. He recurs to the idea of Goethe, that human progress is effected by a spiral ascent. At a higher level men return to a point only a little above the old. Evolution and reversion go hand in hand. Thus he attempts to show that even at this tragical hour we can discern intimations of a better day.

The essays comprising *Les précurseurs* no longer attack adverse opinions and the war. They merely draw our attention to the existence in all countries of persons who are fighting for a very different ideal, to the existence of those heralds of spiritual unity whom Nietzsche speaks of as "the pathfinders of the European soul." It is too late to hope for anything from the masses. In the address *Aux peuples assassinés*, he has nothing but pity for the millions, for those who, with no will of their own, must be the mute instruments of others'

aims, for those whose sacrifice has no other meaning than the beauty of self-sacrifice. His hope now turns exclusively towards the elite, towards the few who have remained free. These can bring salvation to the world by splendid spiritual imagery wherein all truth is mirrored. For the nonce, indeed, their activities seem unavailing, but their labors remain as a permanent record of their omnipresence. Rolland provides masterly analyses of the work of such contemporary writers; he adds silhouettes from earlier times; and he gives a portrait of Tolstoi, the great apostle of the doctrine of human freedom, with an account of the Russian teacher's views on war.

To the same series of writings, although it is not included in the volume *Les précurseurs*, belongs Rolland's study dated April 15, 1918, entitled *Empédocle d'Agrigente et l'âge de la haine*. The great sage of classical Greece, to whom Rolland at the age of twenty had dedicated his first drama, now brings comfort to the man of riper years. Rolland shows that two and a half millenniums ago a poet writing during an epoch of carnage had recognized that the world was characterized by "an eternal oscillation from hatred to love, and from love to hatred"; that history invariably witnesses a whole era of struggle and hatred, and that as inevitably as the succession of the seasons there ensues a period of happier days. With a broad descriptive sweep, he indicates that from the time of the Sicilian philosopher to our own the wise men of all ages have known the truth, but have been powerless to cope with the mad-

ness of the world. Truth, nevertheless, passes down forever from hand to hand, being thus imperishable and indestructible.

Even across these years of resignation there shines a gentle light of hope, though manifest only to those who have eyes to see, only to those who can lift their gaze above their own troubles to contemplate the infinite.

CHAPTER XIX

LILULI

DURING these five years, the ethicist, the philanthropist, the European, had been speaking to the nations, but the poet had apparently been dumb. To many it may seem strange that Rolland's first imaginative work to be written since 1914, a work completed before the end of the war, should have been a farcical comedy, *Liluli*. Yet this lightness of mood sprang from the uttermost abysses of sorrow. Rolland, stricken to the soul when contemplating his powerlessness against the insanity of the world, turned to irony as a means of abreaction—to employ a term introduced by the psychoanalysts. From the pole of repressed emotion, the electric spark flashes across into the field of laughter. And here, as in all Rolland's works, the author's essential purpose is to free himself from the tyranny of a sensation. Pain grows to laughter, laughter to bitterness, so that in contrapuntal fashion the ego may be helped to maintain its equipoise against the heaviness of the time. When wrath remains powerless, the spirit of mockery is still in being, and can be shot like a fire-arrow across the darkening world.

Liluli is the satirical counterpart to an unwritten trag-

edy, or rather to the tragedy which Rolland did not need to write, since the world was living it. The satire produces the impression of having become, in course of composition, more bitter, more sarcastic, almost more cynical, than the author had originally designed. We feel that the time spirit intervened to make it more pungent, more stinging, more pitiless. At the culminating point, a scene penned in the summer of 1917, we behold the two friends who are misled by Liluli, the mischievous goddess of illusion (for her name signifies "l'illusion"), wrestling to their mutual destruction. In these two princes of fable, there recurs Rolland's earlier symbolism of Olivier and Jean Christophe. France and Germany here encounter one another, both hastening blindly forward under the leadership of the same illusion. The two nations fight on the bridge of reconciliation which in earlier days they had built across the abyss dividing them. In the conditions then prevailing, so pure a note of lyrical mourning could not be sustained. As its creation progressed, the comedy became more incisive, more pointed, more farcical. Everything that Rolland contemplated around him, diplomacy, the intellectuals, the war poets (presented here in the ludicrous form of dancing dervishes), those who pay lip-service to pacifism, the idols of fraternity, liberty, God himself, is distorted by his tearful eyes to seem grotesques and caricatures. All the madness of the world is fiercely limned in an outburst of derisive rage. Everything is, as it were, dissolved and decomposed in the acrid menstruum of mockery; and finally

mockery itself, the spirit of crazy laughter, feels the scourge. Polichinelle, the dialectician of the piece, the rationalist in cap and bells, is reasonable to excess; his laughter is cowardly, being a mask for inaction. When he encounters Truth in fetters (Truth being the one figure in the comedy presented with touching seriousness in all her tragical beauty), Polichinelle, though he loves her, does not dare to take his stand by her side. In this pitiable world, even the sage is a coward; and in the strongest passage of the satire, Rolland's own intense feeling breaks forth against the one who knows but will not bear testimony. "You can laugh," exclaims Truth; "you can mock; but you do it furtively like a schoolboy. Like your forebears, the great Polichinelles, like Erasmus and Voltaire, the masters of free irony and of laughter, you are prudent, prudent in the extreme. Your great mouth is closed to hide your smiles. . . . Laugh away! Laugh your fill! Split your sides with laughter at the lies you catch in your nets; you will never catch Truth . . . You will be alone with your laughter in the void. Then you will call upon me, but I shall not answer, for I shall be gagged . . . When will there come the great and victorious laughter, the roar of laughter which will set me free?"

In this comedy we do not find any such great, victorious, and liberating laughter. Rolland's bitterness was too profound for that mood to be possible. The play breathes nothing but tragical irony, as a defense against the intensity of the author's own emotions. Although the new work maintains the rhythm of *Colas*

Breugnon, with its vibrant rhymes, and although in *Liluli* as in *Colas Breugnon* there is a strain of raillery, nevertheless this satire of the war period, a tragi-comedy of chaos, contrasts strikingly with the work that deals with the happy days of "la douce France." In the earlier book, the cheerfulness springs from a full heart, but the humor of the later work arises from a heart overfull. In *Colas Breugnon* we find the geniality, the joviality, of a broad laugh; in *Liluli* the humor is ironical, bitter, breathing a fierce irreverence for all that exists. A world full of noble dreams and kindly visions has been destroyed, and the ruins of this perished world are heaped between the old France of *Colas Breugnon* and the new France of *Liluli.* Vainly does the farce move on to madder and ever madder caprioles; vainly does the wit leap and o'erleap itself. The sadness of the underlying sentiment continually brings us back with a thud to the bloodstained earth. There is nothing else written by him during the war, no impassioned appeal, no tragical adjuration, which, to my feeling, betrays with such intensity Romain Rolland's personal suffering throughout those years, as does this comedy with its wild bursts of laughter, its expression of the author's self-enforced mood of bitter irony.

CHAPTER XX

CLERAMBAULT

LILULI, the tragi-comedy, was an outcry, a groan, a painful burst of mockery; it was an elementary gesture of reaction against suffering that was almost physical. But the author's serious, tranquil, and enduring settlement of accounts with the times is his novel, *Clerambault, l'histoire d'une conscience libre pendant la guerre*, which was slowly brought to completion in the space of four years. It is not autobiography, but a transcription of Rolland's ideas. Like Jean Christophe, it is simultaneously the biography of an imaginary personality and a comprehensive picture of the age. Matter is here collected that is elsewhere dispersed in manifestoes and letters. Artistically, it is the subterranean link between Rolland's manifold activities. Amid the hindrances imposed by his public duties, and amid the difficulties deriving from other outward circumstances, the author built the work upwards out of the depths of sorrow to the heights of consolation. It was not completed until the war was over, when Rolland had returned to Paris in the summer of 1920.

Just as little as *Jean Christophe* can *Clerambault* properly be termed a novel. It is something less than

a novel, and at the same time a great deal more. It describes the development, not of a man, but of an idea. As in *Jean Christophe,* so here, we have a philosophy presented, but not as something ready-made, complete, a finished datum. In company with a human being, we rise stage by stage from error and weakness towards clarity. In a sense it is a religious book, the history of a conversion, of an illumination. It is a modern legend of the saints in the form of the life history of a simple citizen. In a word, as the sub-title phrases it, we have here the story of a conscience. The ultimate significance of the book is freedom, the attainment of self-knowledge, but raised to the heroic plane inasmuch as knowledge becomes action. The scene is played in the intimate recesses of a man's nature, where he is alone with truth. In the new book, therefore, there is no countertype, as Olivier was the countertype to Jean Christophe; nor do we find in *Clerambault* what was in truth the countertype of *Jean Christophe,* external life. Clerambault's countertype, Clerambault's antagonist, is himself; is the old, the earlier, the weak Clerambault; is the Clerambault with whom the new, the knowing, the true man has to wrestle, whom the new Clerambault has to overcome. The hero's heroism is not displayed, as was that of Jean Christophe, in a struggle with the forces of the visible world. Clerambault's war is waged in the invisible realm of thought.

At the outset, therefore, Rolland designed to call the book "un roman-méditation." It was to have been entitled "L'un contre tous," this being an adaptation of La

Boëtie's title *Contr'un.* The proposed name was, however, ultimately abandoned for fear of misunderstanding. The spiritual character of the new work recalls a long-forgotten tradition, the meditations of the old French moralists, the sixteenth century stoics who during a time of war-madness endeavored in besieged Paris to maintain their intellectual serenity by engaging in Platonic dialogues. The war itself, however, was not to be the theme, for the free soul does not strive with the elements. The author's intention was to discuss the spiritual accompaniments of this war, for these to Rolland seemed as tragical as the destruction of millions of men. His concern was the destruction of the individual soul in the deluge produced by the overflowing of the mass soul. He wished to show how strenuous an effort must be made by any one who would escape from the tyranny of the herd instinct; to display the hateful enslavement of individuals by the revengeful, jealous, and authoritarian mentality of the crowd; to depict the terrific efforts which a man must make if he would avoid being sucked into the maelstrom of epidemic falsehood. He hoped to make it clear that what appears to be the simplest thing in the world is in reality the most difficult of tasks in these epochs of excessive solidarity, namely, for a man to remain what he really is, and not to become that which the levelling forces of the world, the fatherland, or some other artificial community, would fain make of him.

Romain Rolland deliberately refrained from casting his hero in a heroic mold, the treatment thus differing

from what he had chosen in the case of Jean Christophe. Agenor Clerambault is an inconspicuous figure, a quiet fellow of little account, an author of no particular note, one of those persons whose literary work succeeds in pleasing a complaisant generation, though it has no significance for posterity. He has the nebulous idealism of mediocre minds; he hymns the praises of perpetual peace and international conciliation. His own tepid goodness makes him believe that nature is good, is man's wellwisher, desiring to lead mankind gently onward towards a more beautiful future. Life does not torment him with problems, and he therefore extols life amid the tranquil comforts of his bourgeois existence. Blessed with a kindly and somewhat simple-minded wife, and with two children, a son and a daughter, he may be considered a modern Theocritus wearing the ribbon of the Legion of Honor, singing the joyful present and the still more joyful future of our ancient cosmos.

The quiet suburban household is suddenly struck as by a thunderbolt with the news of the outbreak of war. Clerambault takes the train to Paris; and no sooner is he sprinkled with spray from the hot waves of enthusiasm, than all his ideals of international amity and perpetual peace vanish into thin air. He returns home a fanatic, oozing hate, and steaming with phrases. Under the influence of the tremendous storm he begins to sound his lyre: Theocritus has become Pindar, a war poet. Rolland gives a marvelously vivid description of something every one of us has witnessed, showing how Clerambault, like all persons of average nature, really

takes a delight in horrors, however unwilling he may be to admit it even to himself. He is rejuvenated, his life seems to move on wings; the enthusiasm of the masses stirs the almost extinguished flame of enthusiasm in his own breast; he is fired by the national fire; he is physically and mentally refreshed by the new atmosphere. Like so many other mediocrities, he secures in these days his greatest literary triumph. His war songs, precisely because they give such vigorous expression to the sentiments of the man in the street, become a national property. Fame and public favor are showered upon him, so that (at this time when millions of his fellows are perishing) he feels well, self-confident, alive as never before.

His pride is increased, his joy of life accentuated, when his son Maxime leaves for the front filled with martial ardor. His first thought, a few months later, when the young man comes home on leave, is that Maxime should retail to him all the ecstasies of war. Strangely enough, however, the young soldier, whose eyes still burn with the sights he has seen, is unresponsive. Not wishing to mortify his father, he does not positively attempt to silence the latter's paeans, but for his part, he maintains silence. For days this muteness stands between them, and the father is unable to solve the riddle. He feels dumbly that his son is concealing something. But shame binds both their tongues. On the last day of the furlough, Maxime suddenly pulls himself together, and begins, "Father, are you quite sure . . .?" But the question remains unfinished, ut-

terance is choked. Still silent, the young man returns to the realities of war.

A few days later there is a fresh offensive. Maxime is reported missing. Soon his father learns that he is dead. Now Clerambault gropes for the meaning of those last words behind the silence, and is tormented by the thought of what was left unspoken. He locks himself into his room, and for the first time he is alone with his conscience. He begins to question himself in search of the truth, and throughout the long night he communes with his soul as he traverses the road to Damascus. Piece by piece he tears away the wrapping of lies with which he has enveloped himself, until he stands naked before his own criticism. Prejudices have eaten deep into his skin, so that the blood flows as he plucks them from him. They must all be surrendered; the prejudice of the fatherland, the prejudice of the herd, must go; in the end he recognizes that one thing only is true, one thing only sacred, life. A fever of enquiry consumes him; the old Adam perishes in the flame; when the day dawns he is a new man.

He knows the truth now, and wishes to strengthen his own faith. He goes to some of his fellows and talks to them. Most of them do not understand him. Others refuse to understand him. Some, however, among whom Perrotin the academician is notable, are yet more alarming. They know the truth. To their penetrating vision the nature of the popular idols has long been plain. But they are cautious folk. They compress their lips and smile at one another like the augurs of

ancient Rome. Like Buddha, they take refuge in Nirvana, looking down calmly upon the madness of the world, tranquilly seated upon their pedestals of stone. Clerambault calls to mind that other Indian saint, who took a solemn vow that he would not withdraw from the world until he had delivered mankind from suffering. The truth still glows too fiercely within him; he feels as if it would stifle him as it strives to gush forth in volcanic eruption. Once again he plunges into the solitude of a wakeful night. Men's words have sounded empty. He listens to his conscience, and it speaks with the voice of his son. Truth knocks at the door of his soul, and he opens to truth. In this lonely night Clerambault begins to speak to his fellows; no longer to individuals, but to all mankind. For the first time the man of letters becomes aware of the poet's true mission, his responsibility for all persons and for everything. He knows that he is beginning a new war, he who alone must wage war for all. But the consciousness of truth is with him, his heroism has begun.

"Forgive us, ye Dead," the dialogue of the country with its children, is published. At first no one heeds the pamphlet. But after a time it arouses public animosity. A storm of indignation bursts upon Clerambault, threatening to lay his life in ruins. Friends forsake him. Envy, which had long been crouching for a spring, now sends whole regiments to the attack. Ambitious colleagues seize the opportunity of proclaiming their patriotism in contrast with his deplorable sentiments. Worst of all for Clerambault in that his inno-

cent wife and daughter have to suffer on his account. They do not upbraid him, but he feels as if he had aimed a shaft against them. He who has hitherto sunned himself in the warmth of family life and has enjoyed the comforts of modest fame, is now absolutely alone.

Nevertheless he continues on his course, although these stations of the cross become harder and harder. Rolland shows how Clerambault finds new friends, only to discover that they too fail to understand him. How his words are mutilated, his ideas misapplied. How he is overwhelmed to learn that his fellows, those whom he wishes to help, have no desire for truth, but are nourished by falsehood; that they are continually in search, not of freedom, but of some new form of slavery. (In these wonderful passages the reader is again and again reminded of Dostoievsky's Grand Inquisitor.) He perseveres in his pilgrimage even when he has lost faith in his power to help his fellow men, for this is no longer his goal. He passes men by, marching onward towards the unseen, towards truth; his love for truth exposing him ever more pitilessly to the hatred of men. By degrees he becomes entangled in a net of calumnies; his troubles develop into a "Clerambault affair"; at length a prosecution is initiated. The state has recognized its enemy in the free man. But while the case is still in progress, the "defeatist" meets his fate from the pistol bullet of a fanatic. Clerambault's end recalls the opening of the world catastrophe with the assassination of Jaurès.

Never has the tragedy of conscience been more simply

and more poignantly depicted than in this account of the martyrdom of an average man. Rolland's ripe spiritual powers, his magical faculty for combining mastery with the human touch, are here at their highest. Never was his outlook over the world so extensive, never was the view so serene, as from this last summit. And yet, though we are thus led upwards to the consideration of the ultimate problems of the spirit, we start from the plain of everyday life. It is the soul of a commonplace man, the soul it might seem of a weakling, which moves through this long passion. Herein lies the marvel of the moral solace which the book conveys. Rolland was the first to recognize the defect of his previous writings, considered as means of helping the average man. In the heroic biographies, heroism is displayed only by those in whom the heroic soul is inborn, only by those whose flight is winged with genius. In *Jean Christophe*, the moral victory is a triumph of native energy. But in *Clerambault* we are shown that even the weakling, even the mediocre man, every one of us, can be stronger than the whole world if he have but the will. It is open to every man to be true, open to every man to win spiritual freedom, if he be at one with his conscience, and if he regard this fellowship with his conscience as of greater value than fellowship with men and with the age. For each man there is always time, for each man there is always opportunity, to become master of realities. Aërt, the first of Rolland's heroes to show himself greater than fate, speaks for us all when he says: "It is never too late to be free!"

CHAPTER XXI

THE LAST APPEAL

FOR five years Romain Rolland was at war with the madness of the times. At length the fiery chains were loosened from the racked body of Europe. The war was over, the armistice had been signed. Men were no longer murdering one another; but their evil passions, their hate, continued. Romain Rolland's prophetic insight celebrated a mournful triumph. His distrust of victory, his reiterated warnings that conquerors are merciless, were more than justified by the revengeful reality. "Victory in arms is disastrous to the ideal of an unselfish humanity. Men find it extraordinarily difficult to remain gentle in the hour of triumph." These forecasts were terribly fulfilled. Forgotten were all the fine words anent the victory of freedom and right. The Versailles conference devoted itself to the installation of a new regime of force and to the humiliation of a defeated enemy. What the idealism of simpletons had expected to be the end of all wars, proved, as the true idealists who look beyond men towards ideas had foreseen, the seed of fresh hatred and renewed acts of violence.

Once again, at the eleventh hour, Rolland raised his

voice in an address to the man whom sanguine persons then regarded as the last representative of idealism, as the advocate of perfect justice. Woodrow Wilson, when he landed in Europe, was received by the exultant cries of millions. But the historian is aware "that universal history is but a succession of proofs that the conqueror invariably grows arrogant and thus plants the seed of new wars." Rolland felt that there was never greater need for a policy that should be moral, not militarist, that should be constructive, not destructive. The citizen of the world, the man who had endeavored to free the war from the stigma of hate, now tried to perform the same service on behalf of the peace. The European addressed the American in moving terms: "You alone, Monsieur le Président, among all those whose dread duty it now is to guide the policy of the nations, you alone enjoy world-wide moral authority. You inspire universal confidence. Answer the appeal of these passionate hopes! Take the hands which are stretched forth, help them to clasp one another. . . . Should this mediator fail to appear, the human masses, disarrayed and unbalanced, will almost inevitably break forth into excesses. The common people will welter in bloody chaos, while the parties of traditional order will fly to bloody reaction. . . . Heir of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, take up the cause, not of a party, not of a single people, but of all! Summon the representatives of the peoples to the Congress of Mankind! Preside over it with the full authority which you hold in virtue of your lofty moral consciousness and

in virtue of the great future of America! Speak, speak to all! The world hungers for a voice which will overleap the frontiers of nations and of classes. Be the arbiter of the free peoples! Thus may the future hail you by the name of Reconciler!"

The prophet's voice was drowned by the clamors for revenge. Bismarckism triumphed. Literally fulfilled was the prophecy that the peace would be as inhuman as the war had been. Humanity could find no abiding place among men. When the regeneration of Europe might have been begun, the sinister spirit of conquest continued to prevail. "There are no victors, but only vanquished."

CHAPTER XXII

DECLARATION OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE MIND

DESPITE all disillusionments, Romain Rolland, the indomitable, continued his addresses to the ultimate court of appeal, to the spirit of fellowship. On the day when peace was signed, June 26, 1919, he published in *"L'Humanité"* a manifesto composed by himself and subscribed by sympathizers of all nationalities. In a world falling to ruin, it was to be the cornerstone of the invisible temple, the refuge of the disillusioned. With masterly touch Rolland sums up the past, and displays it as a warning to the future. He issues a clarion call.

"Brain workers, comrades, scattered throughout the world, kept apart for five years by the armies, the censorship, and the mutual hatred of the warring nations, now that barriers are falling and frontiers are being reopened, we issue to you a call to reconstitute our brotherly union, and to make of it a new union more firmly founded and more strongly built than that which previously existed.

"The war has disordered our ranks. Most of the intellectuals placed their science, their art, their reason, at the service of the governments. We do not wish to formulate any accusations, to launch any reproaches.

We know the weakness of the individual mind and the elemental strength of great collective currents. The latter, in a moment, swept the former away, for nothing had been prepared to help in the work of resistance. Let this experience, at least, be a lesson to us for the future!

"First of all, let us point out the disasters that have resulted from the almost complete abdication of intelligence throughout the world, and from its voluntary enslavement to the unchained forces. Thinkers, artists, have added an incalculable quantity of envenomed hate to the plague which devours the flesh and the spirit of Europe. In the arsenal of their knowledge, their memory, their imagination, they have sought reasons for hatred, reasons old and new, reasons historical, scientific, logical, and poetical. They have labored to destroy mutual understanding and mutual love among men. So doing, they have disfigured, defiled, debased, degraded, Thought, of which they were the representatives. They have made it an instrument of the passions; and (unwittingly, perchance) they have made it a tool of the selfish interests of a political or social clique, of a state, a country, or a class. Now, when, from the fierce conflict in which the nations have been at grips, the victors and the vanquished emerge equally stricken, impoverished, and at the bottom of their hearts (though they will not admit it) utterly ashamed of their access of mania—now, Thought, which has been entangled in their struggles, emerges, like them, fallen from her high estate.

Déclaration de l'Indépendance de l'Esprit

Travailleurs de l'esprit, compagnons, dispersés à travers le monde, séparés depuis cinq ans par les armées, la censure et la haine des nations en guerre, nous vous adressons, à cette heure où les barrières tombent et les frontières se ouvrent, un Appel pour reformer notre union fraternelle, — mais une union nouvelle, plus solide et plus ferme que celle qui existait, avant.

La guerre a jeté le désarroi dans nos rangs. La plupart des intellectuels ont mis leur science, leur art, leur raison, au service des gouvernements. Nous ne voulons accuser personne, adresser aucun reproche. Nous savons la faiblesse des âmes individuelles et la force élémentaire des grands courants collectifs : ceux-ci ont balayé celles-là, en ne laissant, car rien n'avait été prévu afin de la résister. Que l'expérience au moins nous serve, pour l'avenir !

Et d'abord, constatons les désastres auxquels a conduit l'abdication presque totale de l'intelligence du monde et son asservissement volontaire aux forces déchaînées. Les penseurs, les artistes ont ajouté au flétan qui rouge l'Europe dans sa chair et dans son esprit, une somnolence inéluctable de haine empoisonnée ; ils ont cherché dans l'arsenal de leur savoir, de leur mémoire, de leur imagination, des raisons anciennes et nouvelles, des raisons historiques, scientifiques, logiques, poétiques, de haïr ; ils ont travaillé à détruire la compréhension et l'amour mutuels entre les hommes. Et, ce faisant, ils ont enlaidi, avili, abâtardi, dégradé la Pensée, dont ils étaient les représentants. Ils en ont fait l'instrument des passions et (sans le savoir peut-être) des intérêts égoïstes d'un clan politique ou social, d'un État, d'une patrie, ou d'une classe. — Et à présent, de cette mêlée sauvage, d'où toutes les nations sont sorties, victorieuses et vaincues, sortent meurtries, appauvries, et, dans le fond de leur cœur, (bien qu'elles ne le avouent pas), honteuses et humiliées de leur crime de folie, la Pensée, compromise dans leurs luttes, sort, avec elles, abaissée.

Debout ! Dégageons l'Esprit de ces compromissions, de ces alliances humiliantes, de ces servitudes cachées ! L'Esprit n'est le serviteur

de rien. C'est nous qui sommes les serviteurs de l'Esprit. Nous n'avons pas d'autre maître. Nous sommes faits pour porter, pour défendre sa lumière, pour rallier autour d'elle tous les hommes égarés. Notre rôle, notre devoir, est de maintenir un point fixe, de montrer l'étoile polaire au milieu des tourbillons des passions dans la nuit. Parmi ces passions d'orgueil et de destruction mutuelle, nous ne faisons pas un choix ; nous les rejetons toutes. Nous prenons l'engagement de ne servir jamais que la Vérité libre sans frontières, sans limites, sans préjugés de races ou de castes. Certes, nous ne nous désintéressons pas de l'Humanité, pour elle, nous travaillons mais pour elle tout entière. Nous ne connaissons pas les peuples. Nous connaissons le Peuple, — unique, universel, — le Peuple qui souffre, qui lutte, qui tombe et se relève, et qui avance toujours sur le vrai chemin, trempé de sa sueur et de son sang, — le Peuple de tous les hommes, tous également nos frères. Et c'est parce qu'ils pensent comme nous, conscience de cette fraternité, que nous élevons au dessus de leurs combats aveugles l'appel d'alliance, — l'Esprit libre, un et multiple, éternel.

mars 1919

Romain Rolland

Original manuscript of *The Declaration of the Independence of the Mind*

"Arise! Let us free the mind from these compromises, from these unworthy alliances, from these veiled slaveries! Mind is no one's servitor. It is we who are the servitors of mind. We have no other master. We exist to bear its light, to defend its light, to rally round it all the strayed sheep of mankind. Our role, our duty, is to be a center of stability, to point out the pole star, amid the whirlwind of passions in the night. Among these passions of pride and mutual destruction, we make no choice; we reject them all. Truth only do we honor; truth that is free, frontierless, limitless; truth that knows naught of the prejudices of race or caste. Not that we lack interest in humanity. For humanity we work; but for humanity as a whole. We know nothing of peoples. We know the People, unique and universal; the People which suffers, which struggles, which falls and rises to its feet once more, and which continues to advance along the rough road drenched with its sweat and its blood; the People, all men, all alike our brothers. In order that they may, like ourselves, realize this brotherhood, we raise above their blind struggles the Ark of the Covenant—Mind, which is free, one and manifold, eternal."

Many hundreds of persons have signed this manifesto, for leading spirits in every land accept the message and make it their own. The invisible republic of the spirit, the universal fatherland, has been established among the races and among the nations. Its frontiers are open to all who wish to dwell therein; its only law is that of brotherhood; its only enemies are hatred and arrogance

between nations. Whoever makes his home within this invisible realm becomes a citizen of the world. He is the heir, not of one people but of all peoples. Henceforward he is an indweller in all tongues and in all countries, in the universal past and the universal future.

CHAPTER XXIII

ENVOY

STRANGE has been the rhythm of this man's life, surging again and again in passionate waves against the time, sinking once more into the abyss of disappointment, but never failing to rise on the crest of faith renewed. Once again we see Romain Rolland as prototype of those who are magnificent in defeat. Not one of his ideals, not one of his wishes, not one of his dreams, has been realized. Might has triumphed over right, force over spirit, men over humanity.

Yet never has his struggle been grander, and never has his existence been more indispensable, than during recent years; for it is his apostolate alone which has saved the gospel of crucified Europe; and furthermore he has rescued for us another faith, that of the imaginative writer as the spiritual leader, the moral spokesman of his own nation and of all nations. This man of letters has preserved us from what would have been an imperishable shame, had there been no one in our days to testify against the lunacy of murder and hatred. To him we owe it that even during the fiercest storm in history the sacred fire of brotherhood was never extinguished. The world of the spirit has no concern with

the deceptive force of numbers. In that realm, one individual can outweigh a multitude. For an idea never glows so brightly as in the mind of the solitary thinker; and in the darkest hour we were able to draw consolation from the signal example of this poet. One great man who remains human can for ever and for all men rescue our faith in humanity.

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